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Chinese Nationals among "Overseas Chinese" in Singapore: The Sociolinguistic Authentication of Mainland Chinese Identities

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Chinese Nationals among "Overseas Chinese" in Singapore: The Sociolinguistic Authentication of Mainland Chinese Identities

by

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Dedication

For *Papi Lee* and *BeeLEE*

Acknowledgements

When I first entered graduate school, what began as an interest in linguistic structures has somehow evolved into a broadening of my horizons with respect to my own cultural heritage. It has never been my conscious intention to delve into this dissertation topic of Chineseness, but as I look back to my experiences with Chinese communities in various parts of the world, whereby the use of language(s) has always been factored into how one relates to another as a Chinese, it now makes sense to me that Chinese identity construction has always been near and dear to my heart and that it is no coincidence that I explored this topic in my dissertation research.

My interest in investigating the linguistic construction of Chineseness could not have been better timed, given Dr. Qing Zhang's arrival to UT's Linguistics Department in 2001. Her work on yuppie Beijingers' utilization of language and stylistic resources to index different personae from that of other Beijingers working for state-owned businesses sparked my interest in Mainlanders' increasing use of resources from different Mandarin varieties—in a deterritorialized kind of way—to index new, cosmopolitain characteristics. Being a Chinese Singaporean, I gravitated towards the ways in which speakers of Mainland Mandarin varieties drew on Singaporean Mandarin resources. I would like to thank Qing for her invaluable advice on methods of analysis and for her

sharp ability to illuminate how aspects of my study relate to works of broader sociolinguistic relevance.

This dissertation could not and would not have taken shape without the numerous conversations that I have had with Drs. Qing Zhang and Keith Walters. From the outset, both Qing and Keith devoted a lot of time and energy into helping me formulate my research questions and design my fieldwork research. This dissertation was guided by the many challenging, yet structuring, questions—from the big picture to the details—that Qing and Keith posed. I have also benefited greatly from Keith's wealth of knowledge on identity and ideology issues pertaining to both within and outside the Arab world. His ability to draw widely on multidisciplinary work is astonishing and inspirational. I am grateful to have taken many phenomenal sociolinguistics classes taught by Keith. Beyond his academic mentorship, I am also very thankful for his generosity and care in times of personal crises (thankfully, there weren't that many). I am very honored to have been supervised by Keith and Qing and to have had opportunities to TA for them and to have learned a lot from their teaching and scholarly work.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee members, each of whom has contributed to my dissertation research and graduate training. The very first incarnation of my dissertation research proposal was written for an introduction to linguistic anthropology class taught by Dr. Joel Sherzer. I am thankful for his constructive comments which doubtless contributed to my successful NSF grant application later on. Dr. Tony Woodbury's methodical ways of looking at linguistic structures and his acute sense of what studies of language as a social process bring to the larger goals of linguistics studies have been influential throughout my graduate training in linguistics. His insights on language change have helped me to ponder the broader contribution of this study to the field of linguistics, not just sociolinguistics. I was fortunate to have been

a TA for Dr. Robert King for two semesters. Through his classes on language and people, I benefited tremendously from his always engaging case studies on language, nationalism, and ethnic identities. Dr. Avron Boretz's research background in Chinese anthropology was a gift to my study; he brought excellent questions and comments relating to the diversity of the Chinese communities in my study and helped me to think outside the 'linguistics box'.

I would like to thank all the Mainland Chinese in Singapore who graciously welcomed me into their lives even though they knew nothing or only very little about me prior to my meeting them. I am grateful not only for their willingness to let me come into their lives with my participant observation and interview sessions week after week, but also for the fact that they, being sincerely concerned about Chinese issues in the Mainland and also in other parts of the world, have shown me a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness among Chinese peoples around the world.

It is said that it takes a village to raise a child. This dissertation is similar to that proverbial child in that it seemed to have taken form after many years of gestation; also, it could not have come to fruition without what seems like a whole village of people—a global village, to be exact. Throughout graduate school, I never ceased to experience the generosity of counsel, guidance (both spiritual and intellectual), and help from the communities in several parts of the world of which I have been a member.

From my UT community, I would like to extend my gratitude to Rajesh Bhatt, Lisa Green, Kay Lewis, and all faculty members under whom I have had the privilege to study or work. Brian Price, Andrea Truesdale, Ben Rapstine, and Kathy Ross were key staff members in the linguistics department who I depended on a lot—thank you! I would also like to thank my hall mates from the past and present: Cheng Fu Chen, Susan Smythe Kung, Claude Mauk, Amy Peebles, and Alexandra Teodorescu for all the

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All glory, honor, and praise to Jesus Christ, the author and perfector of my faith.

Chinese Nationals among "Overseas Chinese" in Singapore: The Sociolinguistic Authentication of Mainland Chinese Identities

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Er-Xin Lee, PhD.

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Co-Supervisors: Keith Walters and Qing Zhang

This dissertation is a sociolinguistic study of the ways in which Mainland Chinese professionals constituting a new group of migrants in Singapore construct and negotiate their Mainland Chinese identities vis-à-vis 'overseas-born' Chinese Singaporeans. This study investigates how Northern Mainland Mandarin features that are rendered 'supra- or non-local' in the local Singaporean linguistic context are used in identity work among Mainland speakers in Singapore, particularly those from Northern China. At the same time, it also explores the social meanings indexed by speakers' use of Singaporean language resources. Using quantitative and qualitative, ethnographic approaches of analysis to investigate the extent to which speakers vary their use of Mainland versus Singaporean language resources in various speech contexts, this study explores the relationship between speakers' range of language behaviors and their negotiation of identities linked with being Mainland Chinese natives living among non-Mainland Chinese (i.e. Chinese Singaporeans).

Many sociolinguistic studies have addressed the linguistic construction of multiple identities; but identities have mostly been treated as discrete. This study addresses the complex, overlapping layers of being Chinese and investigates at what layers these Mainland speakers construct themselves as same or different in relation to Chinese Singaporeans, a group with which the Mainland speakers claim to share certain cultural practices. It examines how speakers' practices are mediated by their ideologies about linguistic and social practices of Chinese Singaporeans. The data analyzed in this study were collected over 16 months of fieldwork in Singapore and consist of over fifty hours of audio-recordings of ethnographic interviews, self-recorded discourse, and participant observations of 21 Mainland Chinese professionals.

This study addresses a growing awareness among anthropologists, economists, and sociologists of the ways in which new global migration patterns have emerged and enabled migrants to maintain strong economic, cultural and emotional ties to their sending countries. Those academic disciplines have, until now, focused on other forms of social practices to grasp how transnationals negotiate the various ways of identifying with their sending and receiving countries. This sociolinguistic study aims to contribute to a more coherent understanding of the workings of such transnational ties in terms of linguistic practices.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Charts and Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

wo gan jue gu zi li bian hai shi zhong guo ren…jiu suan xin -a po shi yi ge bu tong de guo jia, dan hai shi yi ge **hua ren she hui.** suo yi wo jue de wo hai shi zai, **wo hai shi you zi ji de gen, wo hai shi zai zi ji de, tu di shang he wen hua bei jing li mian…**

'I feel in my bones I am still a *Zhong guo ren* [=Mainland Chinese]…even though Singapore is a different country [from Mainland China], it is nonetheless a society of *hua ren* [=ethnic Chinese people]. Therefore I feel I am still at, I still have my roots, I am still on my own land and [within my own] cultural domain…'

Grace,[1] from Beijing, been in Singapore for 10 years
and is now a Singaporean citizen

I think I'm still a [Mainland] Chinese. yeah. uh ((clears throat)) in terms of, uh I mean that's defini-ly the, my origin? **cause I'm originated from China** so, that's, defini-ly count? as one reason? and the second reason is my, I think my belie- **my values** (and is) **still very Chinese.** yeah. compared to the: Singaporean? yeah. a:nd, and also because of the s- third thing is I think, uh ((clears throat)) (1.7) also my l: **I think language also counts cause I still speak Mandarin? and the Mandarin is still sounds like [that of Mainland] Chinese I mean the, [Mainland] Chinese Mandarin so, is not a Singapore:n's Chinese.** so I think this uh um: **also I have y-know fa- relatives I've friends, in China**? I still comm-cate, uh, in touch with them? s-I think those are, yeah, **those are the main, things that, make me think I'm still a [Mainland] Chinese.**

Jane, from Shandong, been in Singapore for 10 years
and is a permanent resident of Singapore

This dissertation is a sociolinguistic study of the ways in which Mainland Chinese speakers, an emerging group of migrants in Singapore, look both locally as well as trans-locally in the negotiation of their Chinese identities by way of their linguistic practices in Singapore, a multi-ethnic nation with a majority ethnic Chinese population.[2] The data analyzed in this dissertation consist of over fifty hours of audio-recordings of interview as well as naturally occurring discourse, which was collected over 16 months of fieldwork research in Singapore. The fieldwork research involved participant observation and ethnographic interviews of 21 speakers.

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[1] All names are pseudonyms picked by either the participants or by me.

[2] The fieldwork research for this dissertation was funded by a dissertation improvement grant from the National Science Foundation (BCS-0345843).

As reflected in the epigraphs, two speakers from Mainland China (which I use interchangeably with China) living in Singapore each conveyed slightly different perspectives in their self-identification as Mainland Chinese. Grace looked to the *local* Singaporean context to construct her Mainland Chinese identity by claiming rootedness in the Chinese "cultural" domain in Singapore, while Jane focused on her *trans-local* (or transnational) language and relational ties to China; nonetheless, both perspectives converged on a unitary viewpoint in which each speaker viewed herself as Mainland Chinese. Given that identities are not purely grounded in demographic categories and may in fact be constructed and re-constructed at any given time through speakers' various subjective and intersubjective alignments with different individuals, groups, or experiences (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), this dissertation examines Mainland Chinese speakers' construction and negotiation of identities vis-à-vis other Mainland Chinese speakers and Chinese Singaporeans through their use of multiple linguistic resources.

Despite recent focus on practice-based approach to language variation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, 2005; Eckert, 2000; Mendoza-Denton, 1997, 1999), most studies investigate locally (i.e. territorially) based and well-established communities. To my knowledge, language behaviors involving the variable use of language resources from speakers' multiple connections with various nations or cultures have not been investigated. Furthermore, sociolinguistic research on language use among speakers who have moved from one social setting into another has mainly focused on analyzing linguistic features in terms of speakers' ability to differentiate among regional dialect features (Bortoni-Ricardo, 1985). This study examines speakers' use of regional Mainland Mandarin features in a social and linguistic context that is outside the national boundaries within which those features are normally used; at the same time, it also

examines speakers' use of language resources that are widely used in the Singaporean context.

By investigating the extent to which speakers vary their use of Mainland versus Singaporean language resources in a variety of speech contexts with Mainland Chinese and Singaporeans, I seek to not only explore the meanings associated with speakers' use of one type of resource over another in a given speech context, but also identify the relationship between speakers' range of language behaviors and the construction of identities linked with their living among Chinese Singaporeans. Since I am studying the linguistic construction of identities, I am also investigating speakers' beliefs about language, that is, their language ideologies, and how these ideologies shape and are shaped by individuals' ideologies regarding other social practices.

1.1 THE COMMUNITY BEING STUDIED

The Mainland Chinese in Singapore make up a new wave of migrants from China (G. Wang, 2002). As I shall detail in my discussion of the background on the community (p.13), many of the Mainland Chinese from this wave of migration have been in Singapore for no longer than fifteen years prior to this study, whereas the vast majority of Singapore-born Chinese are descended from earlier waves of immigration of Mainland Chinese from Southern China.

As more and more Mainland Chinese have moved to Singapore for work or school, this community has begun to gain prominence as a distinct cultural group whose social and linguistic practices generally are perceived as distinct from those of Chinese Singaporeans. Whereas Singapore is a multilingual and multiethnic, compact and completely urban society, whose nation-building efforts have propelled it from 'third

world' to 'first,' Mainland China is overwhelmingly dominated by a *Han Chinese* culture and one main language (Mandarin), urban only in some areas, and emerging only relatively recently from Communist stronghold.

However, this new wave of Mainland Chinese in Singapore has not yet been studied at length. There has been only one study exploring how the Mainland Chinese in Singapore negotiate their identities; focusing on communication using technology, Chan's (2006) study reveals that through participation in online communities set up by and for Mainland Chinese in Singapore (but whose members also extend to those in China), a large number of Mainland Chinese in Singapore have been able to engage in the transnational imagination of China, thus maintaining their national (i.e. Mainland Chinese) identities. This dissertation aims to further the understanding of the ways in which identities among Mainland Chinese in Singapore are mediated by their transnational links to China through language use, given that linguistic forms are critical indices of social behavior and social meaning (Ochs, 1991; Silverstein, 1976).

At the same time, this dissertation is driven by the premise that the speakers' Chinese identities are mediated not only by their transnational ties to China, but also in relation to the locally born Chinese in Singapore. *Chineseness* comprises the layering of different identities, among which are national, ethnic, and cultural identities. Yet the different layers are not clearly delineated. These layers not only overlap with one another, but they also are particularly difficult to tease apart in light of the fact that to the Chinese, identity is, at best, conceptualized as "Chineseness, of being Chinese and of becoming un-Chinese" (G. Wang, 1988, p. 1). As such, while ethnicity, nationality, and culture are not unknown concepts to Chinese peoples, the specifics of what the categories reference may not be easily distinguishable, particularly among Mainland Chinese who may view

their Chinese language and culture as rooted in their Han ethnicity, which may itself be viewed as congruent with being a citizen of Mainland China.

Hence, in exploring the Mainland Chinese speakers' negotiation of these various layers in relation to Mainland Chinese (in China and in Singapore) as well as to Chinese Singaporeans through language use, I also seek to explore the relationship between the Mainland Chinese speakers' ideologies about Chinese Singaporeans' linguistic and social practices and their ideologies about Chineseness that circulate at a macro-level, that is, ideologies pertaining to the cohesiveness of Chinese peoples both in the Mainland and "overseas." After all, Chinese scholars, political analysts and anthropologists (Ong, 1999; Ong & Nonini, 1997; G. Wang, 1991, 1998a, 2001) have long recognized the collective grouping of Overseas and Mainland Chinese as the embodiment of the power of Chinese transnationalism.

1.2 'MACRO' IDEOLOGIES PERTAINING TO 'MAINLAND CHINESE' AND 'OVERSEAS CHINESE'

In this study, Mainland Han Chinese (henceforth, Mainland Chinese) are juxtaposed with *Overseas Chinese* in Singapore. The vast majority of the citizens of Mainland China is ethnically Han Chinese. *Overseas Chinese* is a term referring to Han Chinese who either have moved or are descendents of those who have moved from the Mainland to other parts of the world (G. Wang, 1998b). Set against the majority-Chinese backdrop of multiethnic Singapore, Mainland Chinese there not only are exposed to the challenges of leaving home and forced to re-evaluate where 'home' is or should be, but also have to address issues related to ideological and/or cultural differences between (second- and even third- generation) Overseas Chinese, that is, Chinese Singaporeans, and themselves. The sheer fact that these two groups of Chinese are brought up in very

distinct societies leads to societal practices that are different, not to mention differences in their ideologies.

From a Western sociolinguistic point of view, which chiefly claims to be bound by fairly fixed patterns of social organization and seeks to uncover universals, the stark distinction between Singaporean and Mainland Chinese societies may lead to the assumption that the linguistic practices of ethnic Chinese from either of these societies can be dichotomized as 'Mainland Chinese' versus 'Singaporean Chinese' and do not overlap. However, Chineseness is construed as shared among Mainland and Overseas Chinese (G. Wang, 1988, 1991). The presence of some common denominator among Mainland Chinese and Chinese Singaporeans is alluded to in Grace's comment above, in which she attributes her ability to continue identifying as a Mainland Chinese to the fact that she is able to feel rooted in the Chinese Singaporean society.

Furthermore, notions such as *Chinese diaspora* and *huaqiao* 'Chinese sojourners' connote the interconnectedness of Chinese peoples around the world as well as emphasize their ties to the Mainland. The ongoing scholarship among researchers of Chinese migration focuses significantly on the spread of ethnic Chinese people around the world (Ma & Cartier, 2003; Ma Mung, 1998, 2000; G. Wang, 1991, 1998a, 2001; Wu, 1994). *Chinese diaspora*[3] is very commonly employed as *the* term that refers to

[3] The *Chinese diaspora* mainly describes migrants from early waves of migration, occurring prior to the exodus of Chinese imperialism, if not during Communism's heyday. More often than not, emigration was a last resort to escape from poverty; most emigrants were unschooled and could offer no more than manual labor to make a livelihood. Today, given the changing face of Mainland Chinese politics and the rapid industrialization of an increasing number of cities in China, more and more Chinese nationals are partaking of the expanding realm of global capitalism. Those who have received higher education and have technical or professional know-how to offer the world therefore already have the cultural capital to position themselves as active (perhaps also soon-to-be successful) players in the global marketplace. Many of the contemporary professional Chinese migrants too have relocated overseas in search of wealth and better work opportunities, but the current migration pattern tends to be voluntary and is an option primarily available only to individuals who have already done well academically and/or financially (Ong & Nonini, 1997; Skeldon, 2003; L.-c. Wang & Wang, 1998).

communities that have resulted from dispersions of Chinese emigrants to various parts of Southeast Asia or industrialized and developed nations from as early as the seventeenth century. The settlers became minority groups in their receiving countries by virtue of the fact that their customs and certain social practices were not shared by the larger community or communities in their receiving countries; but they often continued to foster a solidarity and unity with other dispersed Chinese groups through various transnational networks which allowed them to engage in cultural or business activities that were (and still are) specific to the Chinese people.

The nature of the Chinese diaspora thus entails a sense of identification among Mainland and Overseas Chinese peoples that cannot be evaluated on the same terms as national identification, because it occurs at a supra-national level such that ancestry, most customs and traditions, and, to a certain extent, language are shared by members of this diasporic community. The fact that Chinese people who had moved away from China were, at one point, considered to be "sojourners" suggests that the Chinese living overseas expected to return to the Mainland eventually (L.-c. Wang & Wang, 1998). Even as the label *huaqiao* has given way to *haiwai huaren* 'Chinese people living overseas', the new term "retains the master symbol of irrefutable racial/cultural links to the motherland" (Ong, 1999, p.43). Overseas Chinese are also seamlessly linked to one another and ultimately constructed as similar to one another; the essentialized sameness among them thus supposedly distinguishes them from non-Chinese:

> …there is little doubt that the global discourse of diaspora – *pace* Huaren – is a powerful instrument in stimulating the (desire for) **transnational integration and essentialist homogenization of overseas Chinese communities and individuals around the world as ultimately Chinese, and by implication, as ultimately distinct from non-Chinese**. In this sense, the language of diaspora is

> fundamentally nationalist: it feeds into a transnational nationalism based on the **presumption of internal ethnic sameness and external ethnic distinctiveness**. Unlike the nationalism of the nation-state, which premises itself on a national community that is territorially bound, **diasporic nationalism produces an imagined community that is deterritorialized but nevertheless symbolically bounded**. Its borders are clearly defined, at least in the imagination, and its actual and potential membership is finite: only certain people, notionally 'Chinese' people, can belong to the 'Chinese diaspora'.
>
> (Yeoh & Willis, 2004, p. 185, emphasis mine)

Within the larger Chinese community, the 'macro' understanding of Chineseness is that it is a function of essentialized properties such as a common Confucian heritage or a common written Chinese script (Skeldon, 2003); differences are somehow not factored in to the construction of Chinese identities. As Skeldon (2003) warns, "the commonality of "Chineseness"... can obscure real and significant differences within the Chinese communities" (p. 62).

Recent studies on *Modern Chinese transnationalism*, taking the 'macro' commonalities across different Chinese communities as a given, have focused on the flows and exchanges of capital and symbolic resources within the global network of Chinese peoples. Such studies have suggested that the construction of Chineseness occurs at a *deterritorialized* or *ungrounded* level (Ong, 1999; Ong & Nonini, 1997; W. Sun, 2002; G. Wang, 1998a). The former refers to the fact that Chineseness extends beyond territorial boundaries of nation-states; the latter suggests that more and more of the flows and exchanges among Chinese peoples take place across nation-states, overshadowing the role of the nation-state in the construction of Chineseness. In this dissertation, I explore whether it is the case that territorial boundaries factor minimally into the construction of Chinese identities or whether the speakers in fact draw territorial boundaries between themselves and Chinese Singaporeans. This dissertation thus seeks to

shed light on mismatches between ethnic and national identities by exploring the ways in which the Mainland Chinese position themselves in relation to Chinese Singaporeans.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the current theorizing in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, there is a gap between quantitative and qualitative studies of the linguistic practices of speakers. Quantitative studies tend to take a variationist approach, focusing on the variable use of linguistic features along a linear dimension (Labov, 1966, 1972b), whereas qualitative studies have taken on the approach of investigating social meaning in language use through analyzing discourse-in-interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Schilling-Estes, 2004) or through examining language ideologies (Gal & Irvine, 1995; Irvine & Gal, 2000; Kroskrity, 2004; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Woolard *et al.*, 1998). This study marries both quantifiable linguistic data with qualitative analysis of ethnographic interview discourse to obtain a more thorough understanding of speakers' linguistic practice and ideologies than would be possible relying on either method alone. To arrive at a coherent understanding of the ways in which the Mainland Chinese speakers construct their Chinese identities in relation to Chinese Singaporeans, I address the following research questions:

1. What social meanings do these Chinese nationals assign to their native variety of Mandarin, Singaporean Mandarin, Singaporean English (as well as other varieties of English that they may be familiar with), and the use of two or more of these codes in discourse?
2. How do Mainland Chinese residing in Singapore make use of local and non-local language resources to mark identities of sameness and of distinction vis-à-vis

Chinese Singaporeans? For example, regional features used in Mainland Mandarin but not in the Singaporean variety of Mandarin, when used by Mainland speakers in Singapore, may mark Mainland Chinese nationality. To what degree, then, do speakers select and use those linguistic features to reflect their disalignment from Chinese Singaporeans? Conversely, to what degree do speakers use Singaporean language resources to align with Chinese Singaporeans?

3. To what extent do speakers' linguistic behaviors converge or diverge from their understanding of how Chinese Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese in Singapore behave linguistically? How do distinct language ideologies come together to influence language use? In what ways are linguistic practices informed by local ideologies? In what ways are they shaped by non-local ideologies?
4. How can we best contextualize the linguistic construction of complex identities against the backdrop of notions such as *Modern Chinese transnationalism*, and *Overseas Chinese*, which have traditionally been defined and redefined primarily within the fields of Chinese studies and anthropology?

This is the first empirical sociolinguistic study to engage in multi-disciplinary discussions surrounding cultures, sociological processes, and language behavior in terms of multiple levels of identity construction with respect to the Chinese. In the last decade, there has been increased attention paid to transnationalism, that is, the multiple linkages that exist between migrants and their sending and receiving countries. Transnationalism studies, as championed by American-based anthropologists (Basch, 1994; Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992; Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1995), depart from migration studies in that the flows and exchanges of economic, social, and cultural sources of capital between the sending and receiving countries continue to be factored into the investigation of migrants' new

way of life, as opposed to the emphasis on the influence of just the receiving country on the life of migrants.

Economists and sociologists have been interested in the phenomenon of globalization ever since the number of citizens from various nations participating in a global economic market has been on the rise. With the advent of the study of transnationalism, scholars of cultural studies and anthropology were able not only to join in the observation and analysis of the globalization phenomenon, but also provide systematic, culturally situated ethnographies that attempted to link the 'micro' aspects of migrant life in a particular site of investigation to more 'macro' aspects, such as the governing structures within territorially bounded nation-states or even beyond nation-states. Such investigation, starting from the level of migrants' practices up, aims to build up structure from what may appear to be disorderly about transnational practices. In addition, anthropologists have further sought to unveil the construction of transnational identity through the study of the day-to-day practices of migrants.

What is alarming, however, is that language use, a bona fide social practice and an extremely significant tool for the articulation of identity construction, has not been given the attention it deserves. As the scholarship on transnationalism takes off, particularly as the study of identity construction among migrants advances, it is only appropriate to incorporate a detailed examination of the contributions of language to a social phenomenon, that has, until now, primarily been treated tangentially from a cultural anthropological point of view. Also, because of the unique multilingual situation in Singapore, this dissertation will be the first in Singaporean and Chinese sociolinguistics to shed light on the contribution of the bilingual resources of Chinese Singaporeans to identity construction among Mainland Chinese.

In the following chapter, I provide details of the theoretical framework used for my linguistic analysis of the interaction between language ideologies and language use among 21 Mainland Chinese speakers in Singapore. In Chapters 3 and 4, I outline my methods of data collection as well as give an ethnographic sketch of the community, the speakers, and the language resources available to them. In Chapter 5, I present discourse data revealing the Mainland Chinese speakers' ideologies of and positionings in relation to the local linguistic and social practices.

The analyses of the speakers' use of non-local (i.e. Mainland-based) and local (i.e. Singaporean) language resources are presented in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively, followed by a discussion in Chapter 8 of the relationship between speakers' language ideologies and their overall use of the various language resources, as well as their positioning in relation to Chinese Singaporeans. In Chapter 9, in light of the language behaviors and ideologies examined in the earlier chapters, I summarize the Mainland Chinese speakers' ethnic, nationality, and linguistic positionings in relation to Chinese Singaporeans and draw conclusions about how these positionings culminate in their authentication of their Mainland Chinese identity.

1.4 BACKGROUND ON THE COMMUNITY

Rather than waiting until the ethnographic chapter to begin discussing the group I studied, I conclude this chapter by providing a brief overview of the ethnic Chinese and Mainland Chinese in Singapore.

1.4.1 Ethnic Chinese in Singapore

Singapore was established as a British colony in 1819. The British had made Singapore a free port that served the nautical trading routes at the time. The opportunities for making money through hard labor attracted many unskilled laborers from different parts of Asia. Among those who arrived to work were the Chinese from Southern China, who eventually settled down in Singapore (Suryadinata, 1997, 2002). The number of Chinese immigrants and the subsequent generations of Chinese descendants greatly surpassed those of Indian or Arab descent, and even the indigenous Malays. The ethnic makeup of Singapore in 2000 was 76.8% Chinese, 13.9% Malays, 7.9% Indians, and 1.4% "Others" (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2001). The proportions of these ethnic groups have been more or less stable since Singapore gained independence in 1965. The official languages in Singapore are Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, and English (the language of instruction for all subjects except for instruction of the ethnic languages). See Section 4.1 (p. 58) for more information on the language situation pertaining to Chinese Singaporeans.

The ethnic Chinese in Singapore who are descended from the first wave of Mainland Chinese emigrants are citizens of Singapore. They tend to relate to the "homeland," China, somewhat tenuously and vicariously through their immigrant parents or grandparents. As Wang (2001) notes, "… the deep sense of loyalty to Chinese culture has survived only among those who received a fair amount of Chinese education when

young and seems to have faded among those Chinese born overseas and educated in non-Chinese schools" (p. 289). The Mainland Chinese speakers in this study, on the other hand, having moved to Singapore in the last 10-15 years, are still very much connected to their hometowns through familial ties.

1.4.2 Mainland Chinese in Singapore

In contrast to the so-called 'first wave' of Mainland Chinese emigrants who arrived in Singapore nearly two hundred years ago to work as unskilled laborers, the Mainland expatriates studied here were deemed to constitute a distinct wave of Mainland Chinese migrants. Human resource needs within the Singaporean workforce has always had a history of being met by an inflow of foreign migrants. Although there has been a tradition of international Anglophone teachers and business people arriving to work in Singapore, it was only in the early half of the 1990s that Singapore began to see a huge influx of Mainland Chinese professionals. Following a boom in Singapore's economy in the early half of the 1990s, Singapore opened its doors to foreign workers to fill labor shortages, first for blue-collar positions in various industries not filled by Singaporeans and subsequently for professional and specialized positions (Singapore Manpower Research and Statistics Department, 2004).

The Singapore government had actively attracted students and working professionals from various parts of Asia, particularly China, into Singapore—a phenomenon termed the importation of "foreign talents"—so as to boost its human resources. Among the Mainland Chinese professional workers in Singapore, there were those who had chosen to live in Singapore to gain work experience outside of Mainland China. These professionals' training and expertise had granted them the ability to further their careers in China or any country of their choice, but many had voluntarily elected to

live and work in Singapore. Others had moved to Singapore for their undergraduate or graduate studies. In many cases, they had been given full scholarships to study in Singapore and, upon graduation, were required to work in Singapore for a certain amount of time in fulfillment of their scholarship contracts.

Among the Mainland Chinese speakers in this study, some had moved to Singapore to gain competence in English (while being able to ease in to the new context by using Mandarin with local speakers); a few had hopes of emigrating to Western nations such as the United States and Canada upon gaining the work experience or higher proficiency in English. Some had made their stay in Singapore less temporary, having had their families relocate to Singapore a few years after they had moved there; a few of them had even obtained permanent residence in Singapore or become Singapore citizens.

While professionals from Mainland China were officially welcomed as a boost to the nation-state's human resource in the early half of the 1990s, the growing numbers[4] of these foreign imports had subsequently exceeded the demand for them, particularly when Singapore's economy suffered during the economic crisis in Asia in the latter half of that decade. At that time, the number of job openings was drastically reduced (Singapore Manpower Research and Statistics Department, 2004). While I was conducting my pilot research in Singapore in the summer of 2002, the phrase "foreign talent" was frequently brought up in the "letters to the editor" sections of local newspapers, where a large number of Singaporeans, including second- and third- generation Chinese Singaporeans,

[4] Although there has been no official statistics indicating the number of Mainland Chinese in Singapore, estimates based on the 2000 population census place the number of residents, that is, individuals from Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong who have become Singapore citizens or permanent residents at approximately 100,000 (B. Chan, 2006). Unfortunately, no further breakdown is available to reflect the actual number of residents originally from China. This number does not include a count of the number of non-residents, that is, workers on employment pass. It is likely, though, that there may be more Mainland Chinese who are non-residents than those who are residents. In this study, for instance, 13 of the 21 speakers were non-residents.

had written in to express frustration at the fact that local Singaporeans had to compete with foreigners for a limited number of locally available jobs (Tay, 2002; Yap, 2002).

It was against this backdrop of tension between local Singaporeans and foreign workers (particularly Mainland Chinese) that I conducted my fieldwork research for this dissertation. Throughout the 16 months during which I conducted fieldwork in Singapore, I often read articles in the newspapers that portrayed immigrants from Mainland China as having to prove to the locals that they were contributing to the Singaporean society and were not in Singapore just to take advantage of the economic benefits or to rob Singaporeans of their job opportunities. I should note, however, that in bringing up this situation about Mainland Chinese or "foreign talents" with my Singaporean friends, I did not get a sense that the Singaporeans with whom I spoke were as affected—at least not overtly—by the presence of Mainland Chinese workers in their midst as was projected in the local media. Nonetheless, it was possible that most of this tension was not expressed explicitly by the Singaporeans I know. A majority of the speakers in my study indicated at one point or another during interviews or interactions with me that they were aware of the strain between the locals and foreign workers. None of them, however, reported having been personally stigmatized by Singaporeans.

1.4.3 Categories and labels

The speakers in this study all classified themselves as *zhongguo ren* 'Mainland Chinese'. None of the speakers referred to themselves as *xinjiapo ren* 'Singapore person'. Following the self-assigned label used by the speakers, I refer to the speakers in this dissertation as 'Mainland Chinese'. Even though they were living away from China, none of the speakers considered themselves as 'Overseas Chinese'; they also did not want to

refer to themselves as *hua ren* '(ethnic) Chinese people', a label used by Overseas Chinese (Ong, 1999) and, specifically, by Chinese Singaporeans.

To illustrate, in his explanation of why he preferred to refer to himself as a *zhongguo ren* instead of *hua ren*, one of the participants, William, claimed that the label *hua ren* did not reflect the fact that he was a native of Mainland China. The speakers' unanimous classification of themselves as *zhongguo ren* instead of *hua ren* thus signaled that they valorized identification with a territory, that is, the nation-state of Mainland China more highly than supra-national identification with ethnic Chinese who were not from the Mainland. This process of valuation, though, occurs in this particular context—*zhongguo ren* or *hua ren* were treated as exclusive options. We can imagine that in other cases or contexts, other choices might be made by the speakers.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

The main theoretical concerns of this dissertation, that is, that linguistic practices are the raw material from which social categories and identities are constructed and that language ideologies are mediating forces behind linguistic practices, are issues that have generated a large amount of attention in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, particularly within the last two decades. In investigating the ways in which Mainland Chinese speakers living away from their homeland construct their identities in the social and linguistic context of Singapore, I examine speakers' language ideologies and their linguistic practices through the examination of multiple sources of linguistic data: in addition to examining quantifiable linguistic variables drawn from audio-recorded discourses in multiple speech contexts, I also investigate speakers' discourses (both metalinguistic and spontaneous speech obtained through speakers' self-recordings). In this chapter I lay out the theoretical framework for my study as I review literature pertaining to ideologies and identity construction. I will address my data collection methods in the following chapter.

2.1 SITUATING THIS STUDY IN TERMS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC EXAMINATION OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The study of how identity relates to language use has undergone various stages of formulation in sociolinguistics. Early variationists first studied sociolinguistic variation by correlating linguistic variables with broad, pre-determined identity categories, for example, relating the use of linguistic variables with class, age, and sex (1966; Labov, 1972b; Trudgill, 1974; Wolfram, 1969). Although later studies used ethnographic

methods to investigate locally based communities, linguistic features were still treated as direct markers of community membership (Eckert, 1989; Milroy, 1980).

Sociolinguistic studies on migration have been rooted in this methodology, using social networks to establish a one-to-one mapping of linguistic variables to social categories (Bortoni-Ricardo, 1985). Even in recent research on language and migration, most of the studies have focused on variationist quantitative methods to examine patterns of variation (Amara, 2005; Dyer, 2002; Ivars, 2005); language change via linguistic diffusion or leveling (Britain, 2002, 2005; Chambers, 2002; Kerswill & Williams, 2005; Watt, 2002); or the formation of (new) linguistic norms—or lack thereof—at a community level (Miller, 2005; Owens, 2005). However, little is known about individuals' linguistic behaviors, much less how their behaviors are informed by their language ideologies.

In more recent studies in sociolinguistic variation, the use of linguistic features is no longer deemed as merely reflecting pre-determined social category membership, but as indexing locally salient meanings (Bucholtz, 1999; Eckert, 2001, 2002; Mendoza-Denton, 1997, 1999; Schilling-Estes, 1998). Furthermore, identities have come to be treated as discursively constructed through practice (Bucholtz *et al.*, 1999; Eckert, 2000). Social identities, taken to be one's sense of being a part of a social community, are seen as constructed through the degrees to which individuals participate in shared practices within the community. As such, the current wave of sociolinguistic variation, specifically, the *third wave* as termed by Eckert (2002, 2005), contends that the meaning of features is made explicit through linguistic styles incorporating shared linguistic and social resources within a local community. An example that ties in this perspective on identity construction with language behaviors among Mainland Chinese nationals is Zhang's (2001, 2005) study on sociolinguistic variation among state professionals and

yuppies in Beijing. Her analysis demonstrates that Beijing yuppies use a cosmopolitan variety of Mandarin to construct a new professional identity in a transnational Chinese linguistic market of international business.

Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992) emphasize that the meaning of social categories (such as gender) is not stable across communities. Along the same vein, language resources do not always correspond in meaning across communities; thus, language resources are not always associated with the same categories across different local contexts. It is at a local level among a collective community of speakers that shared "ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices" (p. 464) emerge. In light of social meanings of language resources emerging through localized practice, changes from one local context[5] to another are thus likely to introduce changes to meanings of language resources as well as how the resources are used by speakers. The speakers in Zhang's study are, after all, based in China; outside of Beijing or China, the meanings associated with locally salient Mandarin features such as neutral tones or rhotacized finals thus have to be de-contextualized and re-contextualized within a local context that is not the same as before.

In this dissertation, identity is broadly taken to be "a subject's more or less conscious allegiance to a particular social position" (Cameron & Kulick, 2005, p. 114). The theoretical approach adopted in this dissertation draws in part on identity construction as emerging from situated practices, whereby speakers' use of language resources at the local linguistic level is taken to inform their alignment with or disalignment from other speakers. Since the Mainland Chinese language resources once

[5] As the primary contrast in locality that I wish to make is between the Singaporean and Mainland Chinese linguistic contexts, I take 'local context' and 'non-local or trans-local context' to broadly refer to 'Singapore' and 'Mainland China' respectively, instead of narrowing it down to the various regional cities, town, or villages in China where the Mainland speakers were from.

local to the speakers would have been decontextualized, where their associated meanings would no longer have been the same as meanings in the actual, local (i.e. Singaporean) context, the Mainland Chinese speakers living in Singapore would have had to negotiate new boundaries and meanings in their use of language resources from Mainland China, in addition to making sense of those used in the Singaporean linguistic context.

Through investigating Northern Mainland speakers' use of language features specific to Northern Mainland Mandarin varieties (that is, features not common to the Singaporean linguistic repertoire), this dissertation explores how language features that have been rendered 'supra- or non-local' at a new 'local' level were being used to carry out identity work among the Northern speakers. Given that the speakers' use of non-local features tends to be variable across different speech contexts, I approach the variability between the use versus non-use of the non-local language features by quantitatively analyzing frequencies at which rhotacized finals and neutral tones were used.

Fundamentally, identity work involves speakers positioning themselves as either similar to or different from others (Woolard, 1997). Often, sameness may be projected through masking differences, whereas differences, if left unobscured, might highlight the degree to which speakers distance themselves from an 'other' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a). The levels to which non-local (i.e. Mainland) Mandarin resources are used by speakers can indicate whether the speakers construct themselves as same or different from Singaporean speakers. However, we would be remiss if we did not also investigate speakers' use of local (i.e. Singaporean) language resources in their construction of sameness or difference in relation to Singaporean speakers.

Further, given that local language resources themselves convey locally salient meanings, an investigation into speakers' use of local resources would thus also need to address whether the meanings constructed by the Mainland Chinese speakers in their use

of local language resources are congruent with local meanings. The degrees to which the Mainland Chinese speakers' construction of meanings for the Singaporean language resources correspond with that of Singaporeans would thus provide another avenue through which to examine the speakers' degrees of allegiance to the categories of 'Singaporean' or 'Mainland Chinese'. Hence, this dissertation is one of the first studies to examine not only the use of both local and non-local language resources in the social alignment of speakers, but also the juxtaposition of local and non-local meanings associated with the use of language resources.

2.2 IDENTITY AS FLUID

Identity has come to be recognized as an ongoing production (Hall, 1990), being constantly negotiated and re-negotiated by individuals through discourse (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, 2005). Increasingly, speaker agency in the linguistic construction of identity is also becoming exceedingly crucial to the processes of identity negotiation (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Schiffrin, 1994). For instance, Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985) foreground individual speakers as able to actively use language to engage in *acts of identity* that signify their relationship with respect to other speakers. At the same time, the acts of identity vary across individuals; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller argue that it should not be unexpected that individuals differ in the ways of aligning with or disaligning from others, given that speakers have different language abilities. With Le Page & Tabouret-Keller's formulation that every instance of language use is representative of an agentful creation or projection of identity, the pendulum with respect to identity and language use has thus swung away from the Labovian view that the individual is largely the

intersection of various sociolinguistic constraints and that one's membership in certain groups causes one to speak a certain way.

Many sociolinguists have thus come to view linguistic practices as able to bring about fluid changes to identity alignment, such that speakers may adopt or transcend social categories. Examples can be observed in linguistic phenomena such as *passing* and *crossing* (Bucholtz, 1995; Rampton, 1995). For individuals whose physical attributes (or other perceivable outward characteristics) permit them to come across to others as being of a different ethnic group than their own, *passing* denotes the ability that those individuals have to portray themselves as members of either group (Bucholtz, 1995). Bucholtz stated that passing involves individuals' construction of themselves in ways which help to guide others' perceptions of them. In the process of moving across ethnic boundaries in their construction of ethnic identities, language is inevitably involved as an authenticating tool.

Language crossing, as noted by Rampton (1995, 1996, 1999), is a verbal practice in which speakers use language features or resources typically used by another social group; it connotes "movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries, and it raises issues of legitimacy that participants need to reckon with in the course of their encounter" (Rampton, 1997, p. 2). In crossing, adolescents from the majority ethnic group in Britain codeswitch (i.e. alternate between languages in discourse) between their own native language and other languages used by their friends from minority ethnic groups. The adolescents themselves do not actually have to have full access to their friends' heritage language in order to engage in crossing, nor do they necessarily claim their friends' ethnic identities as their own. Crossing is a means by which speakers, in jocular moments or ritualized instances, signal temporary in-group identification with those of a different group, therein contesting—and transcending—rigid boundaries

between ethnic categories and the linguistic practices associated with them. The adolescents' temporary suspension of their membership in the majority group by crossing, yet not entirely laying claim to membership in the minority groups into which they have crossed, thus exhibits *liminality* (Turner, 1974, as cited in Rampton, 1995, 1996, 1999). The adolescents project that they were neither 'here nor there' in regard to ethnic membership but are instead invested in a sense of multiracial youth identity. It seems that liminal speakers as characterized by Rampton are usually not central members of a group; they also tend not to have overt linguistic or social influence on the larger community of speakers.

2.2.1 Being on the margins and speakers' alignments with different identity categories

This dissertation is theoretically grounded in identity categories being fluid and in speakers having agency, at various times and in different speech contexts, to align themselves differently with different interlocutors. I take the view that agency is not unconstrained—that is, not a display of free will, as it were—but, rather is constrained by one's understanding of the likely consequences and their willingness to abide by the economy of the local context (cf. Myers-Scotton, 1993b on codeswitching).

I pay special attention to the role that liminality plays in the mediation of identities in light of how speakers, by being in liminal positions or positioning themselves as liminal, can display purposeful destabilization of seemingly discrete boundaries, as reflected in the British adolescents' engagement in crossing. In thinking about liminality as denoting a position in which individuals typically are on the margins of social groups, one can also think of other similar positions in which people are not seen as central members within a speech community. Below, I discuss how speakers in 'in-between' positions have been portrayed in sociolinguistic studies. Though the studies discussed do

not necessarily claim that speakers are in liminal positions, the speakers described below nonetheless share commonalities with liminal speakers in that they are often in in-between positions by virtue of the fact that they do not exhibit use of particular features in ways or frequencies that are used by more prominent groups of speakers.

The position of being 'in-between' has conventionally been analyzed as one in which speakers are somewhat dis-privileged in the sense that they cannot lay claim to resources or ideologies in ways that speakers on opposing ends of a linguistic continuum can. In Labov's (1966, 1972b) studies of sociolinguistic variation in New York City, speakers' use of 'standard' versus 'vernacular' forms is correlated with socioeconomic stratification. While speakers in the upper and upper middle classes display predominant use of standard forms and those in the working and lower classes mainly use vernacular forms, speakers in the lower middle class display high levels of variability, even exceeding the use of standard forms among the upper middle class and the use of vernacular forms among the working class.

Analyzed as engaging in hypercorrection or under-generalization in their use of standard and vernacular linguistic forms, lower middle class speakers are portrayed as ungrounded in their language use. The ungroundedness itself is deemed as a reflection of the amount of transitioning that speakers of this class had undergone from moving up from the working class backgrounds of their childhood and would continue to undergo as they strived to move up to the next level in their adulthood. As Eckert (2000) notes, "sandwiched between denial and promise, the lower middle class is outward-directed, based on an ambivalent and tenuous relationship with those above and with those below" (p. 29).

Unlike speakers in Labov's studies who tend to draw on language resources associated with the social category to which they belong, high school students dubbed as

in-betweens by Eckert (1989, 2000) are described as able to tap into a wider range of language resources, thus displaying heterogeneity in their language use. Eckert (1989, 2000) notes that the linguistic choices of *in-betweens* were often imposed by structuring constraints within the community. In other words, in-betweens are constructed by others—and themselves—vis-à-vis the comparatively more homogenous linguistic practices of speakers in relatively stable social groups.

In her examination of the powerful roles played by opposing social categories, *jocks* and *burnouts* at a high school, Eckert (2000) points out that jocks and burnouts construct as well as define social meanings of language use for the whole high school community. *In-betweens* at the high school, while constituting the majority of the student population at the high school, are subjected to the hegemonic influences of the jocks and burnouts, whose opposing social identities at the high school are indexed by their adoption and use of distinctive linguistic features and styles. Eckert notes the dominance of traits associated with jocks and burnouts in the high school being played out in the way that in-betweens characterize themselves in terms of traits which they variously share with jocks and burnouts. Though in-betweens seemingly draw on resources and characteristics of jocks and burnouts (or not), there is usually a symbolic cost involved in that the social networks to which they belong often define whether or not they can actually get to the resources.

With the exception of crossing, speakers are placed in socially marginal positions usually by virtue of the fact that their social and linguistic practices do not fit in with those of (more) prominent social categories within the community. But in the case of crossing among British adolescents, speakers' tapping resources from multiple languages, although deemed liminal on the level of interactions within the community, in fact, is a purposeful and agentful disalignment from their inherited ethnicities. Given that the

Chinese speakers in this study have access to both Singaporean and Mainland Chinese language resources, do their linguistic practices reflect the use of both types of resources? If so, does their 'heterogeneous' language use reflect their being in the marginal or liminal spaces of Singaporean communicative interactions and in what ways do their language use point to their alignment with Mainland Chinese over Singaporeans, or vice versa?

2.3 LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

In thinking about how speakers align themselves with others, I also consider the fact that there are various projections of identity and that speakers may have different stances about the different projections. Speakers' self-reports of the identity categories to which they view themselves to belong are one of the ways in which to gain perspective on speakers' identities. However, while informative of their positionality in relation to other groups of speakers on the one hand, self-classifications may merely reflect their assumptions of essentialized attributes of people on the other hand. Bucholtz and Hall (2003, 2004a) warn that essentialism naturalizes boundaries between self and other by falsely conceptualizing that people of one category share homogeneous attributes and that they are distinguished from people in another category by not having any overlap in properties with those people. They pointed out that, first of all, identities are not anchored in attributes of people, but are, instead, emergent in practice. Second, they are not homogenous within social categories because speakers tend to have different social subjectivities that inform their different positionalities with respect to "(a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 592).

People use practices as grounding assumptions for their assessments of new contexts and experiences; in any given context, speakers develop "ways of being" based on the practices of others and, in turn, position themselves with respect to others through their own practices. Indeed, practices shape the definition of individual as well as group identity within a culture and are thus relevant to revealing how the Mainland Chinese speakers view themselves vis-à-vis Chinese Singaporeans, but it is speakers' ideologies that form a driving force behind their communicative practices (Kroskrity, 2004; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Woolard *et al.*, 1998) and that mediate speakers' language use (Irvine, 1989; Johnstone, forthcoming). Furthermore, it is imperative to obtain speakers' ideologies about languages and language varieties, because as Kroskrity (2004) notes, "language ideologies are productively used in the creation and representation of various social and cultural identities (e.g. nationality, ethnicity)" (p. 509).

Therefore, in this dissertation, in addition to investigating the Chinese speakers' linguistic practices, I also examine how those practices are mediated by their ideologies about language and social practices, which are either self-reported or conveyed through their discourses about language varieties, language choice, and their everyday lives in Singapore. The metalinguistic data serve to provide an in-depth perspective on the ways in which the Chinese speakers draw linguistic and social boundaries with respect to Chinese Singaporeans in ways that cannot be easily elucidated through their self-reports of identity categories to which they think they belong.

2.3.1 Semiotic processes of linguistic differentiation

Investigating general characteristics of how speakers conceive of linguistic differences, Irvine and Gal (1995, 2000) have found that speakers have a tendency to recognize the use of linguistic features or varieties as indices of social characteristics linked to people who use them. In making sense of the relationship between linguistic form or variety and social identities, speakers develop ideologies that help them "locate, interpret, and rationalize sociolinguistic complexity, identifying linguistic variables with "typical" persons and activities and accounting for the differentiations among them" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 36). Irvine and Gal's seminal work identifies three semiotic processes, namely, *iconization, erasure, and fractal recursivity*, that are involved in how ideologies shape speakers' views of linguistic forms or varieties as different from one another.

In iconization, linguistic features or varieties are linked to a linguistic image that is fundamentally congruent with the social image linked with speakers who use those features or varieties. The fact that congruency is assumed between the linguistic and social images reflects essentialization, as speakers look only to certain properties while overlooking others in their delineation of a given linguistic feature or variety from another. Through iconization, a certain language or variety may be deemed "superior" to another, simply because the social characterizations of speakers of the former language or variety are viewed as "more sophisticated" than that of speakers of the latter. The ideologies used to delimit one language from another are shaped by differentiation at social levels. This differentiation is exemplified in the nineteenth-century linguistic mapping of Senegalese languages like Fula, Sereer, and Wolof by Europeans. Speakers of each language were characterized hierarchically with respect to speakers of the other

languages in terms of "intelligence"; the languages were hierarchically differentiated according to the same parameters used in characterizing the speakers (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

While iconization involves essentialization, erasure is a process involving the dismissal of elements that are incompatible with an ideological standpoint; that is, elements which do not seem to fit a certain scheme of interpretation are either written off as unnecessary or modified. Often, erasure goes hand in hand with iconization; while certain linguistic features or language varieties are considered indices of positive characteristics, other features or language varieties may be given negative characterization. In the case of political strife between Serbs and Macedonians in Yugoslav-ruled Macedonia, also discussed by Irvine and Gal, features of Macedonian (the language) which are seen as able to positively characterize Macedonians (the people) are erased by Serbs. Instead, Serbs focused on the less positive characteristics (such as calling Macedonian "simple") as their rationalization for characterizing Macedonians as "stupid."

Fractal recursivity refers to the projection of opposition at one level to other social levels of identity differentiation, such that the oppositions "can produce multiple identity positions at once" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, p. 380). For example, Irvine and Gal state that the Europeans' portrayal of opposition among the Senegalese languages is a recursion of the fact that the relationship between Europeans and Africans is taken to be contrastive. Given that recursivity denotes that identity differentiation can potentially occur at various levels, I am interested in investigating whether linguistic oppositions occurring at the local level, that is, pertaining to Singaporean language varieties and Singaporean speakers, have been adopted by the Mainland Chinese speakers in their language choice and use in Singapore.

Relationship between speakers' language ideologies and language choices

Since Blom and Gumperz's (1972) analysis of the use of standard and dialect features as being shaped by contextual constraints, research on language or code choices has taken a direction wherein code choices have been viewed as either responding to or initiating changes in situations, settings, or topics (Gumperz, 1982). Studies on codeswitching have also noted the use of code choices as strategic, that is, to attain specific communicative goals (Bell, 2001; Myers-Scotton, 1993a, 1993b). As well, some studies on codeswitching in bilingual communities have sought to relate individual codeswitching practices to the communicative repertoires of speech communities (Gal 1979) or to identity issues (Rampton, 1995).

Proponents of discourse-related codeswitching (Auer, 1984a, 1984b, 1988a), arguing that language negotiation occurs as a local, interactional process, advocate the careful examination of codeswitching using a conversation analytical approach. I recognize such an approach that seeks to elucidate the local meanings of codeswitched utterances falls within the purview of practice- or interaction-based sociolinguistic approaches to studying locally constructed identities. While I do examine speakers' projection of Singaporean-like[6] participant roles through their use of mixed language resources in discourse for a segment of the Chinese speakers' discourses, I am not able to use the discourse-related approach as my main approach, because a large number of the speakers do not engage in codeswitching, but rather exhibit use of mixed language resources in limited ways (please see Chapter 7).

[6] I hesitate to use 'Singaporean' in light of the fact that some Mainland speakers' ideologies about their use of mixed language resources revealed that they did not usually set out to portray themselves as Singaporeans, but that their engagement in the Singaporean linguistic practice tended to be viewed as a practical way to communicate as Singaporean speakers would communicate with one another. For an in-depth discussion, please refer to Chapters 7 and 8.

In this study, my primary approach to the study of speakers' use of different languages in utterances is ideology-based. Language ideology, as Woolard (2004) points out, is an important avenue through which to understand how codeswitching (one of the phenomena of the use of mixed language resources which I examine) indexes social meanings. I take the view that it is in metalinguistic discourse that speakers' attitudes towards language varieties, speakers, and practices are directly expressed or indirectly revealed. It is through such kinds of discursive data that I seek to develop an in-depth understanding of their ideologies about the use of one language variety over another. I propose that it is through a detailed understanding of speakers' ideologies about the various language varieties available that then makes it possible to analyze whether the speakers' linguistic practice signifies social meanings that are consistent with their ideologies; because although ideologies are theoretically conceived of as inputs to practices, practices may not always reflect speakers' ideologies, but rather, index other kinds of meanings.

As far as the specifics of my analytical approach are concerned, noting that ideologies of differentiation can manifest from the State level down to the individual level, I draw on all three semiotic processes put forth by Irvine and Gal to analyze how the Chinese speakers' ideologies about the various linguistic varieties in Singapore were informed by local associations between linguistic forms and social meanings. I also analyze the relationship between those local ideologies and the speakers' ideologies regarding Mainland China language varieties, paying attention to how Singaporean and Mainland Chinese ideologies affect the Chinese speakers' language choices in Singapore and the degree of their engagement in the common local linguistic practice of using multiple language varieties in discourse.

2.3.2 Identity construction through 'tactics of intersubjectivity'

As alluded to throughout this chapter, identity, broadly speaking, involves the construction of sameness or difference between speakers (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, 2004b, 2005). The fact that the construction of sameness or difference *must* have multiple points of reference, without which comparisons and contrasts cannot be made, underscores how intersubjectivity underlies identity construction. However, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) point out that sameness and difference need to be further broken down into different axes of identity relations. One of the principles that they put forth in current sociocultural investigation of identity is therefore one of *relationality*, whereby "identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity and difference, genuineness and artifice, and authority and delegitimacy" (p. 598). The three axes on which identity relations are played out deal with "markedness, essentialism, and institutional power" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, p. 383) respectively, the combination of which coherently addresses the processes involved as speakers set themselves apart from other speakers.

Under this principle, speakers negotiate their identities through processes known as *tactics of intersubjectivity*: *adequation* and *distinction*; *authentication* and *denaturalization*; *authorization* and *illegitimation*. Adequation refers to the construction of 'sufficient sameness' whereby differences are erased for the purpose of a given interaction, whereas distinction emphasizes markedness through differences while erasing similarities. Though adequation valorizes shared similarities, it does not necessarily go hand in hand with solidarity. Distinction can be used as a way to dominate, but it can also be used by those who are dominated to defy the hegemonic influences of the dominant group.

Authentication is a process whereby individuals claim to be the "real deal." With the use of this term, Bucholtz and Hall focus on the process of *claiming* realness in discourse rather than the essentialization of what makes a language or its users real—as conveyed by the notion of *authenticity* (Bucholtz, 2003; Woolard, 2005). Following Bucholtz and Hall's distinction between authentication and authenticity, I take authentication to denote the ways in which individuals assert themselves as more "real" as they compare themselves with other individuals or groups. While Bucholtz and Hall view authentication as a process occurring in discursive turns within speech exchanges, I take the view that authentication can also happen at meta-discursive or ideological levels. Denaturalization, on the other hand, is the assertion that one cannot be real. Authorization involves the invocation of some sort of institutional power so as to legitimize an identity, while illegitimation involves the stripping of that same power, sometimes to reinforce hegemonic power and sometimes to resist it.

Throughout the dissertation, I will draw on some of these tactics to articulate the ways—in terms of their linguistic practices and ideologies—in which the Mainland Chinese speakers relate to Chinese Singaporeans. In Chapter 8 I will also examine in greater detail how each of the tactics is negotiated by the collective group of speakers, culminating in their authentication of themselves as more 'Chinese' than Chinese Singaporeans. Having provided an overview of the theoretical framework for my study, I will lay out my data collection methods and a brief ethnography of the speakers in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Data collection and ethnographic outline of the Mainland Chinese speakers in Singapore

The data for this study were obtained from fieldwork conducted in Singapore between August 2003 and January 2005. Through participant observations during lunch meetings with participants, visits to a secondary school and a sports center, and participation in special events, as well as through in-depth interviews, I obtained ethnographic data on 21 Mainland Chinese professionals' language preferences and use of local and non-local language resources. In this chapter I discuss my methods of recruitment of participants and data collection and also sketch the speakers' social ties with other speakers in Singapore and address how I was perceived as a Singaporean researcher by the Mainland Chinese speakers. In the following chapter, I provide a background of the linguistic resources available to the Chinese speakers in Singapore and specifically discuss my ethnographic findings of their language preferences.

3.1 RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

The main criteria which I used in seeking participants for the study were that participants had to have been born in Mainland China, lived there most of their lives, and moved to Singapore for the purpose of pursuing higher education or working in professional or specialized fields. In the sampling of participants, I sought to include Mainland Chinese professionals who had been in Singapore for different amounts of time and whose immediate families were still in China or were living with them in Singapore. In addition, in anticipation of examining speakers' use of Mandarin language resources which were not used locally, that is, phonological features which were associated with

Northern varieties of Mainland Mandarin, I also made sure that there was a mix of speakers from various regions in China.

Through my parents who, as secondary school teachers in Singapore, worked with Mainland Chinese teachers and gymnastics coaches recruited by the Ministry of Education to teach Singaporean schoolchildren, I was introduced to four Chinese language teachers and seven gymnastics coaches. Through a short working stint at a private language school, I also got to know the administrative manager of the school who was from China. I recruited most of the other participants through introductions from my Singaporean friends who worked with or knew of people who knew Mainland Chinese nationals through work.

A list of all 21 participants in the study and brief information on them is provided in Table 3.1 below. More information pertaining to the participants is available in Appendix II. In all, I recruited 11 Southern Chinese (seven female and four male) and 10 (six female and four male) Northern Chinese participants. In addition to the four Mainland Chinese teachers and seven gymnastics coaches, the other participants included two managers, two engineers, two logistics specialists, a multimedia producer, a nurse, a computer programmer, and a financial analyst.

Table 3.1: List of speakers

Speaker	Sex	Age (approx.)	Length of stay in Singapore (yrs)	Region of origin (NC=Northern China; SC= Southern China)	Professional roles
Anna	F	Early thirties	4	Jiangsu, SC	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school
Chan	M	Early thirties	3	Fujian, SC	Engineer at a local firm
Charles	M	Late twenties	1	Beijing, NC	Logistics specialist at a multinational company
Dabaicai	M	Early thirties	2	Shenzhen, SC	Programmer at a multinational company
Dan	M	Mid-forties	3	Jiangxi, SC	Gymnastics coach at the Education Ministry sports center
Gillian	F	Mid-twenties	6	Hunan, SC	Gymnastics coach at the Singapore Sports Council
Grace	F	Mid-thirties	10	Beijing, NC	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school
Jane	F	Late twenties	10	Shandong, NC	Nurse
Julia	F	Early thirties	6	Jiangsu, SC	Rhythmic gymnastics coach at the Education Ministry sports center
Laura	F	Late twenties	1	Beijing, NC	Rhythmic gymnastics coach at local schools
Li Chen	F	Early forties	1	Shanghai, SC	Gymnastics coach at the Education Ministry sports center
Lyn	F	Late twenties	10	Shandong, NC	Manager at a private language school
Rubin	M	Late twenties	2	Shandong, NC	Logistics specialist at a local firm
Shell	F	Early thirties	6	Guangdong, SC	Broadcaster and producer at a local multimedia company
Sihui	F	Late forties	1	Tianjin, NC	Rhythmic gymnastics coach at local public schools
Wei	M	Mid-twenties	1	Inner Mongolia, NC	Manager at a multinational company
William	M	Late twenties	5	Xi'an, NC	Civil engineer with a local construction firm
Xiaobo	M	Early twenties	1	Hubei, SC	Gymnastics coach at the Education Ministry sports center
Yan	F	Late twenties	10	Sichuan, SC	Research analyst at a multinational finance firm
Yilin	F	Mid-thirties	7	Guangdong, SC	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school
Ying	F	Late thirties	3	Xi'an, NC	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school

In this dissertation I have categorized the Mainland speakers as being from Northern or Southern parts of China (labeled as NC and SC respectively). Such categorization of speakers was based on the speakers' own reports of the geographic location of their hometowns, whereby almost all speakers tended to report being from Northern or Southern regions in China but did not further distinguish the Northern or Southern regions. Further, this categorization was also informed by the labels that speakers used for the varieties of Mandarin they spoke in China. In most cases, speakers reported using *beifang hua* 'Northern *Putonghua'* or *nanfang hua* 'Southern *Putonghua*'.

The speakers' identification of themselves using such broad categories might be related to the fact that the context in which they were using these categories of identification was outside China; in Singapore, many of the Mainland speakers only knew other Mainland expatriates whose native regions differed from their own. Their lack of connections with Mainland Chinese from their hometowns or even their native regions might have contributed to their re-categorization of themselves vis-à-vis other Mainland Chinese in Singapore in terms of broader regional distinctions.

It is important to note, however, that while this dissertation primarily adopts the labels as used locally by the speakers and may thus appear to differentiate the Mainland speakers into only two sets of regional speakers, by no means does it ignore the fact that speakers from different regions in China came from different linguistic backgrounds; thus, it was not assumed that all Mainland speakers used *Putonghua* as their dominant language in China. For instance, in certain Southern regions of China such as Sichuan province in the Southwest, local varieties of Mandarin are used among speakers; whereas in other Southern regions such as Fujian or Guangdong provinces, the local Mandarin varieties often are used in fewer contexts in comparison to the local Chinese language varieties. Although speakers from certain parts of Southern China may use Mandarin

mainly in contexts in which their interlocutors are not proficient in the local regional language varieties, the Southern speakers in this study largely constructed their Mandarin use as 'native', as I will point out in their commentaries of language use in Chapter 5.

3.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

I collected two types of data: interactional data and interview data. Interactional data are extremely vital for the analysis of day-to-day linguistic practices, while interview data are an excellent source for analyzing participants' attitudes towards language and social practices. The interactional data included interactions between participants and me, which were recorded in my field notes, as well as participants' audio-recordings of themselves in conversations in which I was not present. My field notes also included interactional data gathered from my participant observations of participants' interactions in daily activities with Singaporean and Mainland speakers.

3.2.1 Collection of interactional data

Through qualitative participant observation of the participants' interactions with me and with their co-workers, friends, or family, I noted their language use in day-to-day social activities on four to eight days over a period of between two and four weeks. The observations took place during participants' free time and lasted approximately 90-120 minutes each time. As a critical tool in ethnographic research, participant observation allows the researcher to obtain data that are as representative of real life as possible. However, a major criticism of this methodology is that speakers are not usually being observed in real life as they are when a researcher shadows their daily activities and records their language behavior; such shadowing sometimes disrupts or influences speakers' language behavior (Milroy, 1987; Milroy & Gordon, 2003). As such, in an

effort to reduce the effects of the *observer's paradox* (Labov, 1972b) while still being able to obtain a broad base of linguistic data taken from a variety of social contexts, I asked participants to audiotape themselves onto minidisc recorders in conversations in the following situations:

a. Talking long-distance on the phone with family members or friends in China, or speaking to family members who live with them in Singapore
b. Shopping at the local market
c. Having a meal with a co-worker (with Singaporean co-workers; and if possible, with Mainland Chinese co-workers as well)
d. Riding in a taxi cab
e. Meeting with other Mainland Chinese nationals at casual and/or formal gatherings
f. At business/work meetings with Chinese Singaporeans

3.2.2 Collection of interview Data

As interviews tend to be perceived as formal and can possibly incite nervousness or discomfort in participants, I interviewed participants only towards the end of my participation observation and after they had finished recording themselves in the various speech contexts. The rationale for holding off the interviews until after participants had had the opportunity to interact with me for a period of time was that participant observation tends to foster familiarity between the researcher and participants over time (Johnstone, 2000). I usually handed the minidisc recorders over to the participants to collect the self-recordings after my second or third interaction with them. By the time they were finished with the self-recordings, I would have had at least three to four

significant interactions with them; thus, usually by the time I started with the interviews, they had become more used to my company.

Participants were interviewed in person, first in a one-on-one format, in two separate sessions. Each participant was also involved in one other interview involving a group discussion among other Chinese speakers participating in the study. I restricted the number of participants in each group interview to no more than six individuals at a time. The three interviews, which were audio-recorded using a minidisc recorder, took place on three separate days and proceeded in the order mentioned below.

In the first of the one-on-one interviews, participants were asked to provide demographic information regarding their hometowns and family ties in China, educational and/or working backgrounds. They were also invited to comment on factors or motivations for moving away from China to Singapore, their lifestyle in Singapore, what they liked or disliked about living in Singapore, and what they missed about China. In addition, they were also asked to state similarities and differences that they perceived of themselves vis-à-vis Chinese Singaporeans and other Chinese nationals in Singapore.

In order to not overwhelm participants with too many questions in one sitting, I scheduled a second interview with them specifically to elicit their attitudes towards language-specific issues. In the second one-on-one interview, participants were asked to comment on the varieties of Mandarin that they grew up speaking as well as on the varieties of Mandarin and English used in Singapore. They were also asked to evaluate their use of Mandarin and English before and after arriving in Singapore. Each of the one-on-one interviews lasted about 60-90 minutes.

Last but not least, in the group interviews involving other Chinese nationals, the participants were asked to compare language use among Chinese nationals in Singapore and language use among Chinese nationals and Chinese Singaporeans. The questions for

the group interviews were designed mainly as prompts for speakers to discuss among themselves. The speakers were also encouraged to discuss other related topics. The group interviews were audio- and video-recorded. The audio-recordings of interviews and speakers' self-recordings in the various contexts were transcribed and then analyzed. I followed transcription conventions that were adapted from those used by Ochs (1979), Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (Sacks *et al.*, 1974), and Tannen (1981). A list of the conventions can be found in Appendix III.

3.3 FIELDWORK ACTIVITIES AT VARIOUS SITES

As most of my participants worked in a variety of professions in different places across Singapore, I conducted fieldwork research at various sites. I traveled to many of the participants' places of work or venues close to their places of work as those places were often convenient for the participants to meet with me during their lunch breaks. Additionally, given that the participants' coworkers often went to lunch with them, my meeting with the participants at or near their work places provided excellent opportunities for me to observe them in naturalistic interactions with local speakers in typical day-to-day activities such as eating lunch.

A number of the participants and I met up during weekends near their places of residence or at public venues like cafés or shopping malls, where we would either chat over coffee, window shop, or run errands together. On one occasion, I attended church with one of the participants; on another occasion, I joined a participant and her Mainland Chinese friend on a walk at a local park; on yet another occasion, I joined another participant and his Mainland Chinese friend for dinner and then walked down Orchard Road, a major shopping district, to view Christmas lights. It was through doing these

activities with some of the participants that I got to interact with them on a casual basis: the researcher-participant dichotomy sometimes became less evident as the participants took to asking me questions and getting to know me. At the same time, spending time with the participants in these activities permitted me to observe their interactions and language use in a greater range of contexts involving their Mainland Chinese or Singaporean friends in addition to Singaporean strangers such as servers at cafés or retail store assistants. These observations were recorded as field notes.

With the four Mandarin teachers and some of gymnastics coaches, in particular, I was able to do more in-depth participant observation by actually spending longer periods of time than just lunch breaks or weekend meetings with them. My ability to see more of these participants than the others was facilitated by the fact that the teachers all taught at the same secondary school and that the coaches were mainly based at one gymnasium, thus, sometimes giving me opportunities to interact with more than one of them during a visit to the school or the gymnasium.

I sometimes arrived at the gymnasium in the late morning, when most of the coaches would be in their office getting ready for the day (they normally trained students from the afternoon until 9pm at night), and then joined them for lunch. In the afternoons, I often sat in on their gymnastics training sessions to observe their language use with Singaporean students.

As for the teachers, though I did not get to sit in on their classes to observe their interactions with local students, I did get to visit them in their offices and was able to see how they interacted with their Singaporean coworkers, some of whom did not speak any Mandarin and communicated only in English with them. In addition, they had also invited me to participate in a dumpling-making event to celebrate the lunar new year at the student dormitory at which they served as faculty chaperones. At the dumpling-

making event, all four teachers were there to teach international students mainly from India, China, and Malaysia how to make dumplings. Perhaps it was the fact that a majority of the students was Mainland Chinese or the nature of the event being focused on celebrating the lunar New Year, a major holiday for the Chinese in China and in Singapore, that made it seem natural for these Mainland Chinese teachers to gravitate towards the Mainland Chinese students and to use Mandarin in that context; it was evident that Anna, Grace, Yilin, and Ying interacted mostly with the Mainland Chinese students, while the other Singaporean teacher-chaperons interacted with the non-Mainland students.

3.4 SOCIAL TIES OF THE MAINLAND CHINESE SPEAKERS IN SINGAPORE

3.4.1 Social ties with other Mainland Chinese

The process of recruiting Mainland Chinese professionals for this study raised two interesting points about the levels of connectedness among the Mainland Chinese speakers and between them and my Singaporean contacts. The first interesting aspect pertains to the Chinese speakers' social networks with other Mainland Chinese in Singapore. Unlike the dense and often multiplex social networks that tend to exist among members of migrant communities (Bortoni-Ricardo, 1985; Milroy, 1980, 1987) or even the reported tendency among Chinese migrants to form pockets of Chinese communities outside of China and to depend on organization structures within those communities (Fan, 2003; Wickberg, 1998), a majority of the Mainland Chinese nationals in this study seemed to be only weakly connected to other Mainland Chinese in Singapore.

A case-in-point regarding the Mainland Chinese in Singapore having weak connections was the fact that although I had invited speakers who participated in my

study to introduce me to other Mainland Chinese contacts, only one of the participants, Shell, actually did so. Even then, apparently limited by the small number of Mainland Chinese contacts she had, she was only able to introduce me to a former neighbor of hers who she had met in Singapore. It seemed that many of the speakers had purposely not sought out other Mainland Chinese in their midst. In fact, more than a handful of speakers like Yilin, Anna, Charles, Wei, Laura, and Sihui even expressed that they did not know how to go about meeting more Chinese nationals.[7]

Furthermore, although most of the speakers lived with other Mainland Chinese nationals, their ties to other Mainland Chinese often did not extend beyond their roommates or spouses. A large majority of them professed to be too busy to form a network of Mainland Chinese friends, instead, choosing to go out with just one or two their roommates who were from China. Only three of the speakers were involved with a church in which they gathered with other Mainland Chinese speakers. And even though associations such as the *Hua Yuan Association*[8] existed to cater to Mainland Chinese who had become permanent residents or citizens of Singapore, none of the speakers in this study who had either of those statuses was a member; many did not even know of the *Huayuan Association* or other such organizations.

Chan (2006) has noted that the Mainland Chinese in Singapore were becoming members of *virtual communities* in which members traded tips about living in Singapore

[7] A few of the participants actually met other Mainland Chinese participants through the group discussion designed for this study and stayed in touch with each other afterwards.

[8] Formed in 2001, the Singapore *Hua Yuan Association* consists of 2300 registered members. Its Website states that the members are Mainland Chinese professionals, most of whom emigrated from China after the 1980s and who are currently "permanently residing" in Singapore ("Hua Yuan Association Website", 2002). Its goals are to help "new immigrants" to Singapore adapt to the multicultural society; to host social activities for members and their families, thereby to serve as platform for networking among its members and also with other social groups; and to promote economic relations between Singapore and Mainland China.

and connected with other Mainland Chinese via online forums or bulletin boards (BBS), therein phasing out face-to-face networking through clan associations or faith-based organizations. While the phenomenon of forming online network ties might indeed have been catching on among Mainland Chinese in Singapore and perhaps changing how social networks might be viewed, most of the speakers in this study did not report participating in those online communities. Hence, I maintain that the network ties among the Mainland Chinese speakers in this study were loose.

Transnational ties to China

However, *every* participant in the study reported staying in touch regularly with their friends and family in China and also claimed to stay abreast nearly daily with news in and about China through Singaporean newspapers, the broadcast media as well as via Web sites based in the Mainland. At times, some of the speakers had even complained to me that the local newspapers were biased against China in their portrayal of news stories from the Mainland and were concerned that Singaporeans were "always getting to hear about the bad side of China." The speakers therefore unanimously exhibited nationalistic pride towards China. As such, the speakers in this study all demonstrated their vested interest in China and Mainland Chinese affairs. Their construction of such transnational ties to their homeland via the various media thus was a reflection of Anderson's (1983) theorizing that transcendence of physical national boundaries has been made possible through the print-media (and other forms of media) as people imagine their communities or nations from afar, beyond those communities or nations in which they are physically situated.

3.4.2 Social ties with Singaporeans

The second interesting aspect that the recruitment of participants pointed to with respect to social ties was that there was very little intersection in shared social activities between my Singaporean contacts and Mainland Chinese nationals. Being a Singaporean who had not lived in Singapore for many years, I was limited in terms of not having as many opportunities as my Singaporean contacts to building relationships with Mainland Chinese through work or other locally based organizations; I had presumed that my Singaporean contacts would have greater access than me to having Mainland Chinese nationals in their social networks. However, it turned out that those of my local contacts who knew Mainland Chinese in Singapore were weakly connected to them only through work.

Although many of my Singaporean friends claimed that there were many Mainland Chinese in Singapore, very few of them actually had social ties to Mainland Chinese nationals. When asked whether they knew any Mainland Chinese nationals, my Singaporean friends often replied along the lines of, "They [i.e. Mainland Chinese] are everywhere. I hear them [i.e. their distinct Mainland accent] all the time; I just don't know any…I'm sure you'll meet them though." Remarks such as this conveyed Mainland Chinese nationals in Singapore as constituting a visibly—and literally audibly—distinct group, but they also projected Mainland Chinese nationals in Singapore as just background players who were not normally involved in the immediate realms of their social interactions.

While I cannot assume that this perspective, coming from a very small number of Singaporeans, was representative of the social ties in general among Singaporeans and Chinese nationals in Singapore, I should note, however, that almost all of the Chinese speakers who participated in my study, including those introduced to me by my local

contacts, had concurred with the locals' views. A majority of the Chinese speakers in my study perceived themselves as only loosely connected with Singaporeans.

For many, it was not for lack of opportunities to interact with Singaporeans that had seemed to result in the weak ties between the Mainland Chinese and Singaporeans. For example, in spite of the fact that they worked in a school with at least 80 other Singaporean teachers, the Chinese language teachers in this study had all stated that their connections with Singaporeans were simply limited to work-related interactions.

It seemed that many speakers perceived their weak ties with Singaporeans as a reflection of the general state of how Singaporeans manage their relationships with one another; that is, many viewed relationships among Singaporeans as placing emphasis on respecting one another's privacy and generally keeping distinct boundaries between relationships at work and outside of work. In light of this insight, a large majority of the Chinese speakers in the study perceived their relationships with Singaporeans as "simple"; the personal space between individuals was viewed as a respite from the unclear boundaries reportedly often exhibited in social interactions among Mainland Chinese. However, many speakers had also shared that the paradigm of keeping boundaries between work relationships distinct from other relationships had left them thinking that the establishment of relationships with Singaporeans outside of work was an impossible feat for them. Thus, while the ties that many of the speakers had with Singaporeans made them feel free from the Mainland Chinese paradigm of "always having people meddle in your life," the feelings of "not being cared for enough" in fact had made some yearn for the "warmer" social interactions with Mainland Chinese back in the Mainland.

Constructing social ties to Singaporeans as a function of transnational ties to China

I propose that some of the speakers' transnational yearning for stronger ties with Mainland Chinese in China was often coupled with, or even fueled by, their own ideologies of differentiation from Singaporeans. As I will explore further in Chapter 5, many of the speakers did not view themselves as fully overlapping in social practices with Singaporeans. Example (1) below is an illustration of how a speaker emphasized difference in social traits between Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese to point to why he personally felt that he was loosely connected with Singaporeans. When asked whether he felt closer to Mainland Chinese in Singapore or Singaporeans, Charles responded that he found Singaporeans to be distant and harder to get to know than Mainland Chinese nationals. He also alluded to Singaporeans' tendency to be distant from one another as a product of being "a little Westernized."

(1) Singaporeans are 'Westernized'
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

Ch: hen nan, wo jue de hen nan you na zhong fei chang-, xin -ia po ren ke neng you dianr xi fang hua. ta men, bu xi guan gen bie ren zou de tai jing ((jin))… mei you she me, bi ran de xuan ze dan shi, **wo jue de wo ke neng hui gen zhong guo de zou de gen jing ((jin)) yi xie…jiao liu de, ke neng cheng du hui geng hao yi xie. bu hui dao nei zhong, da jia jian mian da ge zhao hu zhe yang de, zhe yang de cheng du er yi.**

'[it's] very difficult, I find it very difficult to have that kind of extremely-, Singaporeans are perhaps a little 'Westernized'. They, [are] not used to having close ties with other people… [I] don't have much of a choice but, **I think I may walk a little more closely with Mainland Chinese [in Singapore than with Singaporeans]. The extent of interaction will perhaps be a little better [with other Chinese nationals here than with Singaporeans]. [My interactions with Chinese nationals] won't be at the level [typically exhibited among Singaporeans, whereby] everyone simply exchanges pleasantries and that's it.**'

It is extremely interesting that Charles' remark above indicated his distance from Singaporeans, given that he had married a Singaporean and professed to spending most of his free time with his wife and in-laws. He had also reported to not having any Mainland

Chinese connections in Singapore, other than a few from work. Yet, his expressing of a greater level of kindredness with Mainland Chinese than with Singaporeans indicated that the level of social connectedness which he desired ran deeper than simply being physically a part of a local network with his in-laws. Thus, at a more profound level, it seemed that the Mainland Chinese speakers viewed themselves as unable to feel as if they belonged in Singapore, as illustrated by Ying's sharing in Example (2) below.

(2) Like a guest, unable to feel belonged in Singapore
Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)

Y: … zhong guo de zhong guo ren ah=yin wei ta zai zi-i de zu ((zhu)) guo hanh, suo yi **ta jiu you hen QIANG lie de -e zhong zhu mo de yi shi=jiu b-xiang wo men zai ze ((zhe)) bian zong -hi ((shi)) zai zuo ke.** suo yi hui qu le zhi hou mei ci zai tan de shi-ou eya mei ci yi hui jia jiu hen gao xing. zi ji zuo zhu ren ma. zhe zhong gan jue zhen de hen ming, hen ming xian. **jiu na ge XIN qing shi WAN quan bu yi yang de.**
…jiu ke neng bi ru **zai zhong guo wo zuo shi jiu fei chang de, fang xin da dan kai fang de qu zuo**=jiu bu hui you she me ke neng (nian qing xie) she me hanh. **zai zhe bian hao- ang zuo shi qing jiu shi, ((clicks)) zong, zong hui jiu shi zhong gui zhong ju lah.** jiu, ye jiu shu- ru xiang sui su=ren jia ze me zuo wo m-n jiu ze me zuo=… (2.8) **jiu xin qing bu da yi yang.**

'…the Chinese in China PART[9]=because *they* are in their homeland PART, therefore ***they*** **will have a very strong sense of ownership and belonging=unlike *us* here, always feeling like we're guests [in Singapore].** This is why everytime I go back [to China] and talk [about being in China] PART everytime I go home I would feel very happy. [Because in China] I am a master [i.e. not a guest] PART. This type of feeling is truly very, very obvious. **That is, my mood [in China] would be ABSOlutely different [than it is here]**.
...it's perhaps like in China I would feel extremely carefree and unrestrained with the way I do things=and would not have perhaps (being young) whatever PART. Over here [in Singapore] it seems like when doing things ((clicks)) [I'd] always, always abide by the rules PART. That is like, [I] assimilate=[I'd] follow how other people do things…that is, [my] mood would not be quite the same [as if I were in China].'

[9] PART= phrase or sentence-final particle

In this section, I hope to have shown that many of the Chinese speakers in this study had weak or loose ties with other Mainland Chinese in Singapore as well as with Singaporeans, but that their affinity towards China was, in some ways, strong as they constructed their transnational imaginings of and belonging to China even while physically removed from the Mainland. In light of many of the Chinese speakers' perceived disconnect from Singaporeans, how then, did they view me as a Singaporean studying their linguistic behaviors?

3.5 RELATIONSHIP OF THE RESEARCHER WITH THE CHINESE SPEAKERS

3.5.1 Attitudes of the speakers towards my language use

Although I am a native Chinese Singaporean, many of the speakers had shared with me that they viewed my use of Singaporean Mandarin as "different" from their general perceptions of Singaporean Mandarin, which was often conceived of as "ungrammatical" and not up to 'standard' with the Mandarin used in China (see Chapter 5). Because my spoken Mandarin was perceived to be "more grammatical" than that of regular Singaporean speakers, in my first interactions with the Chinese participants, a number of them mistook me for a fellow Chinese national.

Laura, a high school gymnastics coach from Beijing who I met while doing participant observation of her Chinese coworkers, had initially mistaken me for a fellow Chinese speaker. In her first conversation with me she had asked me "*ni shi na li ren*" 'which place are you from?' Laura was surprised to learn that I was a native Singaporean. She later explained that she had thought I was a Chinese and was thus interested to find out which region of China I was from. In (3) below, Laura revisited her first impression of me during an interview that occurred later and pointed out that my lack of a

Singaporean accent was what led her to think I was also a Mainland Chinese. Further, she elaborated that she was more comfortable communicating with someone who she perceived as not having a Singaporean accent than someone with a Singaporean accent, thus suggesting that she was less likely to align herself with a Singaporean Mandarin speaker.

(3) Lack of Singaporean accent
L= Laura, female, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

L: *anh* ni de pu tong hua ye, ye suan shi, jiu shi, **xin –a po de kou yin hen shao ji ben shang mei you**=yin wei di yi ci wo jian dao ni wo hai yi wei ni shi zhong guo, she me di fang guo lai de. **wo ren wei jiu zhe yang de jiao liu hao xiang gan jue: mm: ze me shuo? (3.4) geng zhi jie geng qin qie yi dian. hao xiang biao da de yi si ke yi geng qing xi yi dian.**

'Your *putonghua*[10] is considered, that is, does not have much of a Singaporean accent, in fact, there practically isn't any=because the first time I met you I thought you were from some part of China. I think being able to communicate this way feels like, mmm, how shall I put it? ((pause)) more direct and closer [than when speaking with a speaker of Singaporean Mandarin]. It's like it is possible to convey what I mean more clearly.'

From my experience with Singaporean speakers, the question of another's place of origin is generally not asked among Singaporeans, as distinctions in places of origin are not usually made, given the smallness in the physical size of Singapore.[11] The Mainland Chinese speakers in my study, when introduced to other Mainland speakers, seemed to always take an interest in their new acquaintance's regional background. The knowledge of another's regional background, it seemed, was a sort of ritualistic speech act in which they engaged to establish identification with one another as Chinese nationals. Through finding out about one another's regional affiliations, they were able to

[10] The term *Putonghua* refers to the variety of Mandarin that is considered 'standard' in Mainland China.
[11] At 699 km^2, Singapore is comparable in land area to an American city like Austin, Texas (669 km^2-city limits), but is approximately six times as densely populated as Austin (Singapore Economic Development Board, 2007; United States Census Bureau, 2005).

establish further common grounds such as lived experiences in particular regions of China or shared knowledge about one another's regions of origin.

In light of the fact that my use of Mandarin was a point of reference in some speakers' discussion of Singaporean Mandarin, it would probably be appropriate for me to address my own linguistic behaviors during and outside my interactions with the Chinese participants in my study. In the sixteen months that I spent conducting fieldwork in Singapore I used the Mandarin variety which I grew up speaking with my parents. Hence, the phonological and syntactic features as well as lexical choices which I employed reflected those used by my parents, who, being of Southern Chinese descent, generally exhibited phonological features resembling those used more in Southern than Northern China.

In general, I tried to maintain a consistent level of Singaporean Mandarin proficiency that was normally exhibited when speaking with Singaporean speakers. In my interactions with the Chinese speakers I had also monitored my speech to exhibit the smallest possible extent of convergence to the speakers' use of Chinese Mandarin. To this end, I continued to employ syntactic and phonological habits that were native to me and did not employ neutral tones or rhotacization in my speech. Nonetheless, I still received complimentary remarks from some of the speakers about my ability to understand and use constructions or idioms which they thought to be reflective of a very good grasp of Mandarin proficiency and, thus not expected of a Singaporean speaker. Although my proficiency in Mandarin might have been aided by my having taken advanced Mandarin classes in secondary school, I certainly did not consider my Mandarin proficiency to be very distinct from that of most Singaporean Mandarin speakers.

Even though my nationality as a Singaporean was made known to all the speakers during formal introductions, several speakers continued to make reference to my

speaking "good Mandarin" in subsequent conversations, often to emphasize their point that "good Mandarin" was seldom heard among Singaporean speakers. The speakers' comments expressing surprise at my unusual competency as a Singaporean Mandarin speaker highlighted the fact that many, if not most, of the Chinese speakers associated Singaporean Mandarin speakers in general as having low levels of Mandarin proficiency. Such an association, which many speakers claimed was based on their interactions with Singaporeans, was indicative of differences they perceived between themselves and Singaporean Mandarin speakers in the use of features of Chinese and Singaporean Mandarin.

In particular, the Chinese speakers seemed to have consensus as to whether the presence versus absence, as well as extent of use, of certain shared features of Chinese and Singaporean Mandarin would be evaluated as positive or negative, which led to assessments of whether speakers were associated with either Chinese or Singaporean Mandarin. It seemed to be the case that the Singaporean Mandarin features used in my speech were as important to the Chinese speakers' consideration of the 'localness' of my Mandarin use as features that were *not* exhibited in my speech. As pointed out by a few of the Chinese speakers, my use of Singaporean Mandarin was deemed distinct from other Singaporeans' by their perception that I used fewer utterance-final particles such as *lah* and *leh* than most Singaporean speakers who they had come across on a daily basis.

To illustrate, Wei had noticed an increase in his use of the above-mentioned particles, which he noted as a practice that was distinct from his native use of Northern Mandarin. In (4) below he suggested that it was possible to differentiate Singaporean Mandarin from other varieties of Mandarin known to him based on the use of an inventory of terms which he deemed 'Singaporeanized'. As I apparently did not make use

of those specific words or particles in my initial conversations with him, he could not tell that I was a Singaporean.

(4) Absence of local terms in my speech
W= Wei, male, mid-twenties, from Inner Mongolia (NC)

W: hen xia yi shi de. (4.5) bi jiao xin –a po hua de. ke yi neng gou ting de chu lai.

'[my use of local terms] is subconscious. ((pause)) [the terms] are more Singaporeanized. You can hear the difference [between Singaporeans and Chinese Mandarin speakers].'

E: mm.

W: **jiu xiang wei she me wo di yi ci ting bu chu ni jiang de yi yang. ni mei you ni, ni mei you yong dao nei, nei ji ge ji ge de: nei, nei xie xin –a po xi guan xing de yong (de ci).**

'This is why I couldn't tell the first time I heard you speak [that you were Singaporean]. You don't, you don't use those few, those few, those [local terms] typically used in Singapore.'

Wei's remarks above also suggested that, at least in the initial stages of our meeting, he related to me more as a Mainland Chinese than a Singaporean. William also indicated a sense of familiarity with me through my use of Mandarin with him. He stated in our first meeting that had I begun conversing with him in English he would have thought that I was asserting linguistic superiority over him, as reflected in (5) below. William indicated his appreciation of my use of Mandarin and also suggested that he aligned more closely with speakers of Mandarin.

(5) Affinity to me because of my use of Mandarin
WL= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC)

WL: ru guo jin tian lai dao zhe ge di fang, ni yao gen wo shuo ying wen (de) hua, wo hui jue de *wah!* zhe g-ren gao gao zai shang. tong yang de, dang **ni** gen wo shuo, shuo zhong wen, shuo de **ca bu duo** de shi hou, wo jiu mm, (wo men) guan xi hen, hen jin le=wo hui jue de hen qin qie.

'If you had spoken English with me today, I would've felt *wah!* 'this person is trying to be high above me'. Similarly, when **you** speak *zhongwen* (Mandarin) with me, **after a while**, I mmm, we are very close=I will feel a sense of closeness.'

Although William had been in Singapore for four years and had reported to have gained competency in English, he still felt linguistically distant from Singaporean interlocutors who spoke English with him. In the remark above, William's use of 'you' (in bold), while referring to me, could also be interpreted similar to the indefinite pronoun 'you' in English; thus, his comment suggested that his preference for conversing in Mandarin could also extend to conversations with Singaporeans in general. His use of *cha bu duo,* as highlighted in the transcript and translated as 'for a while' could also refer to his assessment of the standard of Mandarin as 'pretty good', implying that he had placed a positive value not just on the use of Mandarin, but also on the level of proficiency. In the case that he did indeed use 'you' to refer to me, it was possible that he used *shuo de cha bu duo* to point to his evaluation that I 'spoke similarly' to him.

The communicative rapport that I was able to build as a result of many of the Chinese speakers' perceptions of my Mandarin proficiency as on par with their native use of Mandarin was also frequently reflected in their use of pronouns in descriptions of Singaporean versus Mainland Chinese linguistic practices. The Chinese participants often used the out-group pronominal marker "they" or "them" to refer to Singaporean speakers, leaving me out of their generalization of Singaporean speakers. Hence, the distinction of my identity as a Singaporean seemed to have been somewhat diminished as the speakers had somehow categorized my Mandarin proficiency as 'exceptional'.

Just as speakers whose ability to use linguistic features not usually associated with their pre-assigned social categories—and to use them authentically—fall into danger of being deemed 'spectacular' and then treated as not a part of the 'core' social group (Sweetland, 2002), I was being exceptionalized because my fluency in Mandarin was judged as superior to that of other Singaporean speakers. In classifying me as such, I propose that the Mainland Chinese speakers would thus be able to leave their

construction of the majority of Singaporeans as "non-proficient" Mandarin speakers undisturbed; furthermore, they would be able to maintain an intersubjective distancing of their native Mandarin practices from those of Singaporeans.

(6) Not much difference between my spoken Mandarin and that of Mainland Chinese
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

Ch: wo hen fu ze ren di shuo ni de zhong wen shuo de he zhong guo ren mei shen me bu yi yang

'I can responsibly tell you that there is not much of a difference between your spoken Mandarin and that of a Mainland Chinese [i.e. I am not joking with you when I say that you speak Mandarin as well as a Mainland Chinese]'

Crucially, in authenticating my use of Mandarin as being "not much different" from that of Mainland Chinese speakers, as shown in Example (6) above, the Chinese speakers in this study in fact authorized themselves as true or authentic purveyors of Mandarin. In Chapter 5, I shall further examine ways in which these Chinese speakers distinguished themselves from Singaporeans as they applied Mainland Chinese standards onto Singaporean practices. However, let me first provide an ethnographic overview of the Chinese speakers' use of the various language resources available to them in the Singaporean linguistic context.

Chapter 4: Choosing among language resources available in Singapore

In this chapter I present some background on the various language resources to which the Chinese speakers had access in Singapore. I also provide a brief sketch of speakers' general use of language. Through specific examples from speakers' metalinguistic comments, I seek to show that the linguistic choices which speakers had to make on a daily basis were complex and, in some ways, were tied in with how they wished to project their Mainland Chinese identities in relation to Singaporeans. First, I provide a brief outline of the language situation among Chinese Singaporeans.

4.1 BACKGROUND ON LANGUAGE USE AMONG CHINESE SINGAPOREANS

English

Singapore adopted English as its official trade, government and education language as a consequence of over one hundred years of British colonization. Since 1819, when Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore as a trading port for the British East India Company, the island has prospered into a nation rich in the diversity of the many peoples that had been drawn from various regions in Asia. The onset of education, with the establishment of English-medium schools, opened doors to the propagation of English within the local community.

The practical benefits from knowing English, as well as the prestige attached to it, eventually propelled the development of a bilingual education system beginning in 1956. Under this system, English was used in the same curriculum, with Mandarin for Chinese Singaporeans (and Malay or Tamil for Singaporeans of Malay or South Asian Indian descent respectively (See Figure 4-1)), so that most students would learn English as the language of academic and economic advancement while acquiring the languages

representative of their ethnic backgrounds. After Singapore obtained political autonomy from Malaya in 1959, and subsequently gained independence in 1965, not only did English not lose its role as a fundamental language of trade, what with the loosened colonial ties, but it in fact gained more ground as a language that was to become a permanent fixture in Singapore.

Chinese languages

The languages spoken by the first Chinese immigrants to Singapore originated from the Southern regions of China. These languages include Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, and Hakka. The advent of the bilingual education system in 1956 introduced Mandarin as an official language taught in schools to the local Chinese. In the 1957 census, only 0.1% of the local Chinese population claimed Mandarin as its native Chinese language (Chua, 1962); the regional Chinese languages were used natively by an overwhelming portion of the local Chinese community in the home setting. In the same census, Hokkien was claimed to be spoken natively by 39.8% of the local Chinese population; Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, and Hakka were spoken natively by 22.6%, 20%, 6.8%, and 6.1% respectively.

As seen from the percentages of native speakers of the various language varieties, the vast majority of the local Chinese community did not speak Mandarin natively. Yet Mandarin was instituted as the 'mother tongue' of Chinese Singaporeans by the State. This language planning move was strategic on multiple counts. At the local level of nation-building and imagination of a cohesive ethnic identity among the Chinese in Singapore, promoting Mandarin to official status meant that all the major Chinese linguistic groups in Singapore were at equal standing with one another, given that none of the languages was singled out as more prominent than the others. At a transnational level,

Singapore's prescription of Mandarin rather than the other languages was linked with the fact that Mandarin was already an important common language in Mainland China, known as *Putonghua*. The relationship between making Mandarin the common language in Singapore and the widespread use of Mandarin in China marked a link between the cultural heritage of Chinese Singaporeans and "an ancient civilization with an unbroken history of over 5000 years" (Lee, 1984, p. 3, as cited in Teo, 2005), that is, Mainland Chinese civilization. The quoted phrase above was extracted from a speech by Singapore's first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew. In the same speech, Chinese Singaporeans' ability to speak and read the Chinese script was claimed as invaluable to their retention of traditional values such as "filial piety, loyalty, benevolence, and love."

Interestingly, in spite of the fact that Singapore and Beijing are separated by geographical distance, the variety of Mandarin used in Singapore is based on the standardized grammar and phonetic pronunciation of the Northern Mandarin dialects. In acquiring Singaporean Mandarin, Chinese Singaporeans follow Mainland China's written script, which is based on a simplified writing system. *Hanyu pinyin*, a transcription system based on the Roman alphabet which is widespread in China, is also taught in Singaporean schools to facilitate language learning.

Although Mandarin was taught to Chinese Singaporeans of different language backgrounds, most students receiving a Chinese education in the early stages of the implementation of Mandarin still mainly spoke their home 'dialects' outside of school. With the continued use of the various Chinese regional languages in familial contexts, the local Chinese community did not appear to be a cohesive community, because speakers from each language group still tended to congregate with those from the same group. In the post-colonial, nation-building years after 1965, in an effort to "unify" speakers of the different Chinese languages as one group of 'Chinese' speakers, Mandarin was further

emphasized as the language of wider communication—a social glue, as it were—for all Chinese in Singapore (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999; Teo, 2005).

However, given that Hokkien was spoken by such a large segment of the Chinese population, it was deemed to constitute one of the five major languages in Singapore, the other four languages being State-instituted ones: English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil (Kuo, 1980). As a language variety with the largest percentage of Chinese speakers in Singapore, Hokkien was not only spoken by its native speakers, but also understood by 97% of the non-Hokkien Chinese population, according to a survey in 1978 (Survey Research Singapore, 1978). Additionally, in that survey, Hokkien was reported to be understood by a small segment of the Malay and Indian population in Singapore.

A State-instituted *Speak Mandarin Campaign* was launched in 1979 to further "help" the local Chinese population speak Mandarin more frequently, to the extent that the regional Chinese languages was used less frequently ("Speak Mandarin campaign Website", 2004; Wong, 2000). Just prior to the inception of this language campaign, approximately 85% of the Chinese population was still only using their regional languages at home, even though Mandarin was already being taught in schools for close to two decades. Because a majority of the local Chinese did not actually use Mandarin outside of the school setting, the government found that the use of the regional languages at home impeded the speakers' attainment of proficiency in Mandarin and English. As such, the campaign began with a focus on discouraging the use of the regional languages at home and in the media. The campaign proved to be "effective" to the extent that the percentage of households that used Mandarin as their dominant language rose from 10.3% in 1981 to 30% in 1990 and 45% in 2000, while the percentage of households that used regional dialects decreased from 76% in 1980 to 48% in 1990 and 30% in 2000 (Khoo, 1981; Teo, 2005).

In many cases today, the younger, third- or fourth-generation Chinese Singaporeans, having learned Mandarin as their dominant Chinese language, usually use Mandarin as their *de facto* Chinese language to communicate with one another (Tan, 1998; Wong, 2000). However, the language use among this group of Chinese Singaporeans is further complicated by the fact that they receive the bulk of their education in English because the multiethnic make-up of the Singaporean population calls for the use of English as the language of wider communication among Singaporeans. According to Pakir (1993), a survey of undergraduate Chinese Singaporean students found their verbal repertoire to generally comprise English, Mandarin and a native Chinese dialect. These students might additionally speak another Chinese dialect, Malay, and/or a foreign language such as German, Japanese, or French. Generally, Mandarin tends to carry less functional prestige than English. In recent years, the focus of the Speak Mandarin campaign has shifted from emphasizing Mandarin use instead of the use of regional languages to promoting it as a "cool" language to learn and speak among the younger generations, as illustrated by slogans such as "*Huayu*, Cool. Use it. Don't lose it."

Despite Mandarin having been given the status of *lingua franca* among the Chinese in Singapore, it should be reiterated that Mandarin was not a native language to almost all the local Chinese. The Chinese languages that are native to them have not been eradicated from the local linguistic context. Many Chinese Singaporeans continue to use those language varieties to communicate with older Chinese speakers, with as many as 72% of the Chinese population aged 55 years and older still speaking only the regional language varieties rather than Mandarin (Teo, 2005). Hokkien has retained its role as an unofficial lingua franca among the local Chinese in certain social contexts. For instance, many of my male, Chinese Singaporean friends who have undergone military training in

Singapore have reported the prevalent use of Hokkien in the army: if one did not already understand Hokkien, one would inevitably pick up some degree of competency—in either speaking or understanding—of the language.

Hence, as the above outline reveals, the language resources available to Chinese Singaporeans do not strictly include those from the local variety of Mandarin. Given that the Chinese languages which are native languages of a large segment of the Chinese Singaporeans population are still being used at some level of local, social interaction, compounded with the fact that English is taught at school since kindergarten, many Chinese Singaporeans do not in fact have native competence in Mandarin. As I shall show in Chapter 5, many of the Mainland Chinese in this study zoomed in on this point and constructed the use of Mandarin among the local Chinese as not on par with Mandarin use among Mainland speakers.

4.2 MAINLAND CHINESE LANGUAGE VARIETIES

A majority of the Mainland speakers in this study claimed to be native speakers of *Putonghua,* albeit with different regional accents. Many of them also reported speaking the language varieties indigenous to their native regions, such as *Fujian hua* 'Fujian language' (known as Hokkien in Singapore), *Guangdong hua* 'Guangdong language' (also known as Cantonese), or *Shandong hua* 'Shandong language'.

4.2.1 Background on *Putonghua* and Mainland regional language varieties

The regional languages used in various parts of China share a largely common lexicon and are categorized as 'united' by a common written script. However, they reflect a wide range of differences in terms of syntax and phonology and have been characterized as mutually unintelligible (Chen, 1999). Mandarin, a regional Chinese

language that was originally spoken only in the Northern regions of China, is technically mutually unintelligible from the other languages as well. Mandarin was, however, set apart from the other regional languages as *the* common language for all of China. With the different regions of China truly united linguistically through the use of Mandarin as a common language, the status of Mandarin was elevated above all other regional language varieties to that of China's only official language. The label, *Putonghua*, which is glossed as 'common language' and is the label in currency in China, refers to the lingua franca, Mandarin.

4.2.2 Northern versus Southern Mainland Mandarin varieties

Stemming from a longstanding, sociopolitical ideology originating from the Archaic Chinese period (as early as 1324 BC), which increasingly emphasized the ordinance of a 'Standard Chinese' to serve as a lingua franca across regional clans and tribes, regional language varieties have been given subordinate sociolinguistic status with respect to a 'standard' variety (Chen, 1999).[12]

In the context of the Modern Chinese era (late nineteenth century to present), Beijing Mandarin, a Northern Mandarin variety, has been regarded as the primary variety on which Standard Chinese is based, not least because the central government is and has been located in Beijing. Its elevated status is also brought about by the enactment of the 'Act of approaches to the unification of the national language' in 1911. Of lesser significance than Beijing Mandarin but nevertheless having had influence on the definition of 'Standard Mandarin' are other Northern varieties of Mandarin. Northern

[12] A description of the socio-historical motivations from Archaic- through Modern Chinese for the raising up of particular regional dialects of China to 'standard' status and the development of Mandarin as the lingua franca used in contemporary China is provided by Chen (1999).

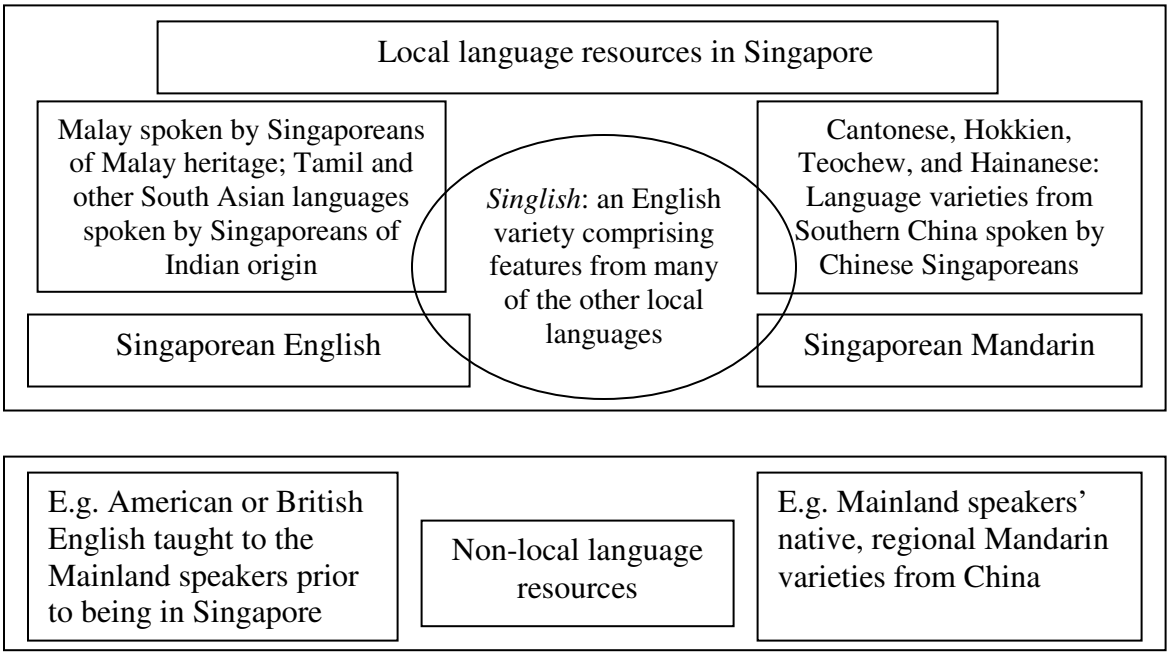
Chinese Mandarin varieties are generally regarded by Chinese speakers worldwide as more 'standard' than the Southern varieties (Chen, 1999).

As noted in Section 3.1, in certain regions, the regional Chinese language varieties may be used more often and in more contexts than *Putonghua* by speakers. In this respect, some of the Mainland speakers in this study might have used their native language varieties as their dominant language of communication in their hometowns. In the Singaporean linguistic context, most of the Southern speakers reported speaking a variety of *Putonghua* that was more akin to Singaporean Mandarin than to the varieties spoken in Northern parts of China. At the same time, however, the fact that *Putonghua* was claimed as 'native' by almost all the speakers reveals an interesting point about the speakers' authorization of themselves with respect to language varieties that may not be spoken natively by them per se.

4.3 SINGAPOREAN LANGUAGE VARIETIES

In addition to the speakers' own varieties of Mainland Mandarin, which constituted their non-local linguistic resources in Singapore, the other linguistic resources available to the speakers included non-local English varieties as well as languages and language varieties spoken locally. As shown in Figure 4-1, the different language varieties have been categorized under 'local' versus 'non-local' language resources. By 'local', I refer to language resources generally available in Singapore; 'non-local' resources refer to those not used in Singapore. The non-local resources consisted of language varieties used by the speakers prior to their moving away from China and were therefore more familiar to the speakers than the local Singaporean resources.

Figure 4-1 Language resources available to the Mainland Chinese speakers in Singapore



Although speakers differed in their individual English abilities, during my participant observations, many of them used simple sentence structures and deferred to local pronunciations of Singaporean English. Important to note is the availability of *Singlish*, a local language variety whose name, a blend of 'Singapore' and 'English', suggests its approximation to the local variety of English (D'Souza, 2001; Gupta, 1998; Llamzon, 1977; Platt, 1975, 1980, 1982; Platt & Weber, 1980; Platt *et al.*, 1984).[13]

[13] The 'standard' variety of English in Singapore includes a Singaporean accent and is closer to British English than American English lexically and grammatically, given that Singapore was once colonized by the British. Singaporean English also minimally incorporates some adopted words from the various ethnic languages, but remains by and large mutually intelligible with other English varieties used around the world (cf. D'Souza 2001; Gupta, 1998; Llamzon, 1977; Platt, 1975; 1980; 1982; Platt and Weber, 1980; Platt et al., 1984). It is, therefore, not the same as Singlish, which shows great direct influence from Malay, the Chinese languages, and Tamil.

Platt and Weber (1980) classified Singaporean English (SE) as a lectal continuum, defined along the lines of socio-economic status, which generally correlates with the educational background of speakers. 'Standard Singaporean English' has been likened to the *acrolect*, that is, a variety on the higher and more

Singlish draws heavily from Malay vocabulary and the syntax of Mandarin and other Chinese languages. D'Souza (2001) notes:

> [Singlish] is used in relaxed, informal situations… by people who know each other well; but it is also used to address strangers if they are Singaporean. In fact, Singlish is used by almost all Singaporeans regardless of education, status, etc. Unless the context is a formal one, Singlish seems to be the preferred variety.
>
> (D'Souza, 2001, p. 8)

Below, I provide a few examples of Singlish. Though hypothetical, they are nonetheless commonly used in conversations among Singaporeans of different ethnicities.

(7) Use of Malay vocabulary

A: Eh! Where you go? [or: Where you going?]
Hey, where are you going?

B: Go *jalan-jalan*.
Go for a walk [lit: walk-walk in Malay].

(8) Use of *can* to voice disbelief or complaint

A: Cannot like that *lah*. How can?
It cannot be this way. How can it be?

Translates from Singaporean Mandarin syntax:
bu keyi zhe yangzi lah. zeme keyi?
Neg. can this way PART. Question-marker can?

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prestigious end of the continuum. 'Standard SE' is associated with what is termed 'International World English'. Singlish, on the other hand, is linked to the basilectal end of the continuum. Pakir (1991) reclassified the continuum into two different clines that were dependent on formality and proficiency. She proposed that SE was used for very formal situations, while Singlish was used for most informal purposes. SE tends to be used primarily amongst speakers with a good grasp of English, who can also switch to Singlish, but those with relatively fewer years of education in English tend to speak Singlish predominantly. While 'Standard' Singaporean English is usually understood with ease by foreigners, Singlish tends to be less so.

(9) Use of *can* as an interrogative marker and as a response to a question

A: You wait for me, can?
Can you wait for me?

Translates from Singaporean Mandarin:
ni deng wo, keyi ma?
You wait me, can Interrogative-PART?

B: Can.
Yes.

Translates from Singaporean Mandarin:
Keyi
Can.

Given that Singlish may be characterized by syntactic features from Mandarin and that the use of Singlish is widespread within the Singaporean context, several speakers noted its utilitarian function as a variety which was forgiving of grammatical transfer from Mandarin into English. Therefore, to some of the speakers in this study, Singlish reportedly served as a linguistic platform on which the speakers practiced English while having the ability to fall back on a syntax reminiscent of Mandarin.

4.4 ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES ON PARTICIPANTS' LANGUAGE PREFERENCES IN SINGAPOREAN LANGUAGE CONTEXTS

While I will examine the speakers' use of specific Mainland Mandarin and Singaporean language resources in Chapters 6 and 7, here, I will first provide an overview of the speakers' language preferences. As far as I could tell from my observations and from the speakers' self-reports of their interactions with various groups of people, the teachers and gymnastics coaches were more inclined to use Mandarin in most of their daily interactions than the other Chinese speakers in the study. Below, I provide a description of language use among the teachers and coaches, who I have dubbed as *Mandarin-speaking specialists*, and then contrast their language use with that

of the other speakers, who I have grouped together as *Professionals in English-speaking domains*.

4.4.1 Mandarin-speaking specialists

The Mandarin-speaking specialists have been thus labeled as they had been recruited by the Singapore Education Ministry for their specific language and sports expertise. In light of these speakers' jobs being related to their special expertise, the dominant language which they used in their jobs was that in which they had received training in China. In the case of the Chinese language teachers, Mandarin was in fact indispensable in their job. As for the coaches, given that their gymnastics training in Mainland China had been done in Mandarin, the language which they used in coaching Singaporean trainees therefore also defaulted to Mandarin.

Chinese language teachers

Grace, Yilin, Anna, and Ying had been in Singapore for 10, 7, 4, and 3 years respectively. They spoke mainly Mandarin with each other as well as in interactions with their Chinese Singaporean coworkers and students at the secondary school at which they taught Mandarin,[14] often peppering their utterances with final particles like *laeh* or *hanh*. Each of the speakers had pointed out to me that their abilities to use as much Mandarin as they did in their work context was not typical of language use in other Singaporean work contexts or even in other schools; they were aware that their use of Mandarin at work was

[14] As one of 10 secondary schools in Singapore specializing in teaching advanced levels of Mandarin, the population of this particular school was predominantly made up of Chinese Singaporeans. At the end of Secondary 4 (equivalent to the 10th grade in the United States), students at this school typically take a 'Higher Chinese' examination, an examination usually taken by students at other schools at the end of their first year in junior college (equivalent to the 11th grade in the United States). Apart from the Mandarin classes, all other subjects are taught in English. The vast majority of the teachers at the school were Chinese Singaporean, but there was also a number of teachers of Peranakan (Straits-Chinese), Malay and Indian heritage who had no knowledge of Mandarin.

supported more at the school than at other places of work because of its emphasis on the inculcation of Chinese language and culture to its students. Ying, in particular, had expressed to me her relief that she was teaching at that particular school instead of at other schools, claiming that she might not have "lasted" as long as she had in Singapore if she had had to speak English with her Singaporean coworkers.

Out of the four speakers, Grace seemed most at ease with the use of English. Like many Singaporeans who employ foreign "domestic maids" to help with household chores, Grace had a live-in Filipina helper with whom she communicated in English. On one of my visits to her home, I noticed that her Singapore-born children spoke both English and Mandarin with a Singaporean accent; particularly, she used English more often with her three year-old son than with her daughter. I later found out from her that her son was more proficient in English than Mandarin because he had reportedly grown up with their Filipina helper as his primary caregiver.

Gymnastics coaches

Sihui, Li Chen, and Dan had all been coaching gymnastics in China for at least two decades; Julia and Xiaobo had both previously competed at major international competitions while Laura had competed at the collegiate level. They had all been hired by the Singapore Education Ministry to provide gymnastics training to schoolchildren. Li Chen, Dan, Julia, and Xiaobo, in particular, specialized in coaching students on the Singapore national team. While Julia had been working there the longest (six years), followed by Dan (three years), Li Chen, Xiaobo, Laura, and Sihui had all only been in Singapore for around one year.

When I first met these coaches during one of their training sessions, my first impression was that they used highly technical and descriptive terms in Mandarin in

communicating with their Singaporean trainees. Their trainees seemed to be able to follow for the most part; at times, however, it appeared that the Mandarin technical terms used by the coaches were too obscure for the trainees, as the trainees sometimes appeared confused and had to turn to other trainees to clarify what they were supposed to do.

It was also interesting to see that the Singaporean trainees tended to speak English among themselves and were gregarious when interacting with each other, but they were more subdued when speaking Mandarin to the coaches. Granted, the difference in their affective stances in relation to each other and to their coaches might have been reflective of their showing respect to the coaches by acting more restrained. However, it seemed that the trainees' competence in Mandarin might also have factored into the formality of their interactions with their coaches. To illustrate, I noticed that a few of the trainees who seemed to speak more Mandarin than the others were somehow able to joke around with and be teased by the coaches in moments just prior to the start of their training session or during breaks in a way the others were not.

Newer trainees, in particular, seemed less able to follow those Mandarin instructions, as evidenced by an incident between Dan and three trainees who began training under him for the first time on one of the afternoons that I was there. Realizing that the new trainees, two Chinese Singaporeans and a Malay Singaporean, did not understand his Mandarin instructions and that his gestures and use of body language only helped to an extent, Dan enlisted the help of two older girls who had been training under him to convey his instructions to the new trainees. Thus, the older girls became interpreters for him, using English to relay directions to the new trainee who was Malay.

Although these coaches seemed to have each developed ways of overcoming the language barrier with some of their trainees, their lack of use of English apparently was an issue with their immediate supervisor, a Singaporean who wanted them to use more

English, especially with non-Chinese trainees. On one particular occasion, a few non-Mandarin-speaking vendors had approached Xiaobo to ask him about what equipment needed to be replaced at the gymnasium. Instead of responding in English, Xiaobo replied in Mandarin and made one of his trainees interpret his Mandarin response into English for the vendor. He was later reprimanded by the Singaporean supervisor (in Mandarin) for making his trainee interpret for him and was urged to stop using Mandarin with his students so that he would actually get to practice his English. The reprimand from the supervisor, however, did not prevent Xiaobo from continuing to use Mandarin with his trainees.

The coaches often bantered with each other, speaking faster than when speaking to their trainees. When talking among themselves, they tended to use Mandarin idiomatic phrases, which, according to them, they did not often do when speaking with Singaporeans, reportedly for fear of the phrases being too complex to be understood by the local speakers. When ordering food at lunch, I noticed that Sihui spoke with her native Tianjin dialect of Mandarin and tended to use Mainland Mandarin lexical terms for items which had their own Singaporean terms; for example, she used *mi fan* 'rice' (lit: 'rice cooked-rice' instead of the locally used *fan* 'rice' (lit: 'cooked rice'), thus indexing non-Singaporeanness. While Sihui's use of Mainland Mandarin lexical items might not have been surprising given that she had only lived in Singapore for just under a year, Julia, who had been in Singapore the longest among the coaches, exhibited difficulties with using English to order her meal from a non-Chinese Singaporean. Instead of speaking, she pointed to the particular dish that she wished to order.

In sum, the above speakers tended to use Mandarin in and outside their work. The teachers and coaches were sometimes in situations where the use of Mandarin was not appropriate given that their interlocutors did not speak Mandarin. It seemed that while

many of them had cited improving their English as one of their goals for being in Singapore, most of them had not devoted effort to speaking or practicing English, since their work or expertise did not require the use of English. Thus, they were almost always in linguistic contexts in which they interacted mainly with Mainland Chinese coworkers and in which Mandarin was used predominantly.

4.4.2 Professionals in English-speaking domains

The professionals classified under this label all used English to varying degrees in their work. Some of the speakers clearly had either been in Singapore for longer periods of time or had learned and used English in English-speaking countries prior to living in Singapore. Thus, I have further classified the speakers according to their English-speaking experiences.

Speakers with less English-speaking experience

In some ways, Wei, Rubin, and Chan, who had been in Singapore between one and three years, exhibited similarities with the teachers and coaches in that they were used to speaking Mandarin more than English. Although these three speakers worked in English-speaking domains, they all professed to be weak in their English proficiencies and had difficulty communicating entirely in English. Wei, for example, stated that he had a hard time writing one-page reports in English, which he had to turn in biweekly. Though I did not get to observe him in conversation with his coworkers, his eight-minute self-recording of a conversation with coworkers while at work was predominantly in Mandarin, with some instances of borrowings from English and use of final particles. He later stated that he gravitated more towards Mandarin speakers from Malaysia or China at the manufacturing plant where he worked, explaining to me that he would have to speak

mostly English with Singaporean speakers, which he found difficult to do all the time. Wei expressed that he desperately needed to enroll in classes to improve his English.

Like Wei, Chan and Rubin depended mainly on the use of Mandarin outside of work. Chan also felt the strain from not having the vocabulary to communicate more in English with his Singaporean coworkers. Rubin reportedly struggled with the use of English, but nonetheless was critical of Singaporean speakers' pronunciation of English. He related an incident which occurred while studying for his Master's at a local university: he reported hearing a Singaporean speaker direct him to 'seminar room *A*' when in fact it should have been 'seminar room *eight*'. That slight mispronunciation, he claimed, made him search in vain for a 'seminar room A'. Thus, claiming that Singaporean speakers were bad enunciators, Rubin did not per se model his English use on Singaporean English, but rather on American English, which he claimed to have learned in China. This example illustrates that Rubin perceived differences in the symbolic value of different varieties of English. In Chapter 5, I will examine more of Rubin's and other speakers' attitudes towards Singaporean speakers and their use of English and Mandarin.

Speakers with more English-speaking experience

Jane, Lyn, and Yan, Shell, Dabaicai, Charles, and Gillian used mostly English in their conversations with their Singaporean coworkers. Jane, Lyn, and Yan had all been in Singapore for 10 years, and Shell and Gillian for six years. While Dabaicai and Charles had been in Singapore for relatively fewer years, that is, two years and one year respectively, they had both completed two-year Masters' degrees in Australia and the Netherlands respectively.

Jane, Yan, and Shell often engaged in local linguistic practices such as the use of final particles like *lah*; not only did they strike me as very proficient in their use of Singaporean English, but also their use of English words in Mandarin discourse was highly reminiscent of linguistic behaviors among Singaporean speakers. Jane's use of English, in particular, reflected the use of lexical items, syntactic structures, and phonological features[15] which, for the most part, resembled those used by Singapore English speakers. Unlike all the other Chinese speakers in the study who used Mandarin in their responses to interview questions posed in Mandarin, Jane chose to respond mostly in English.

A majority of these speakers used English outside of the work context as well. For example, Jane and Charles, who were married to Singaporean spouses, used English with their spouses. Charles varied between the use of Mandarin and English with his wife as well as with his in-laws. In my interactions with Jane and her husband, she did not use Mandarin with her husband at all; additionally, in her self-recorded conversation with her mother-in-law in which they were making dinner plans, she used English for the most part, with the exception of naming certain Chinese dishes in Mandarin.

Many of these speakers' facility with English was evident through the emails and text messages which they sent me. Compared to the written English skills of Chan, as shown in the text message in (10) below, speakers like Jane and Yan had fewer grammatical errors in their text messages and emails, as shown in (11) and (12).

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[15] Like many Chinese Singaporean speakers' pronunciation of sounds in English, Jane had a tendency to pronounce the voiced interdental fricative sound, /ð/ as in '**th**ey', with a sound approximating the voiced alveolar stop [d]. Unlike some Chinese Singaporean speakers who use the voiceless alveolar stop—aspirated or unaspirated—i.e. [t] or [t^h] for the voiceless interdental [ɵ], as in '**th**ink', Jane's tendency was to produce the sound farther back from the interdental position, closer to the voiceless alveolar fricative [s]. Her interchanging of [w] and [v] sounds, as in [ven] for 'when' and [weri] for 'very' were also not typical of English pronunciation among Chinese Singaporeans.

(10) Text message from Chan (12/28/04)
C: I reached. Hee, enjoy to talking with u! Good night.

(11) Text message from Jane (7/27/04)
J: 4 pm? Then I may not be able to stay there long. I am involved in a performance in the hospital on the day in the evening. May have to leave early.

(12) Email from Yan (3/15/04)
Ya: I called you last week to let you know the progress of the recording but you didn't answer the call. I have done 4 out of 6 tasks, except the **conversion** [conversation] at workplace and in the market. Sorry, I don't shop at the marketplace as we normally dine out.

However, even these more experienced English speakers sometimes exhibited some slight errors with spelling, as seen in (12) or in mixing up singular instead of plural marking in expressions like 'no worries', seen below in (13). In (14) Charles' use of *I got whole day meeting*, while ungrammatical, would be considered acceptable and comprehensible to Singaporean speakers as it was essentially an instantiation of Singlish.

(13) Text message from Dabaicai (7/27/2004)
D: Ok, no **worry** [worries]

(14) Text message from Charles (8/3/2004)
Ch: can we do next week? Fri I am on leave Thursday **I got whole day meeting** [I have a meeting all day]

In the above description of various speakers' language use, my intention was to provide an overview of the various levels to which different groups of speakers used Mandarin or English and to show general language preferences among the speakers. It is not my intention, however, to portray the speakers as always using one particular language variety over another. In the next section, as I demonstrate by using specific metalinguistic commentaries from speakers, the Mainland Chinese speakers often had to negotiate which language varieties to use in various speech contexts.

4.5 COMPLEXITY IN CHOOSING AMONG LOCAL LANGUAGE VARIETIES

4.5.1 What language varieties to use?

Speakers' choices among the language varieties involved a complex process in which they often had to turn to metalinguistic knowledge—acquired through practice—to guide them through what varieties to use and when to use them. Consider the following remark by William in Example (15), in which he described a hypothetical situation involving the need to react to an unexpected event, in this case, accidentally spilling a cup of water. He predicted that Mainland Chinese speakers' first linguistic reactions would involve the use of Mandarin exclamatory particles like *eyo* and *ah* and an idiomatic phrase like *wo de tian*, which is roughly equivalent in function as 'my goodness'. He predicted that Singaporean speakers, in contrast, would exclaim in English *oh my goodness*, therein pointing out a key difference in language choices between Chinese Singaporean and Mainland Chinese speakers.

(15) 'Oh my goodness'!
WL= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC)

WL: you yi bei shui. tu ran wo peng dao le. yi ge zhong guo ren ken ding jiang, "*eyo* wo (de) tian *ah*!". yi ge xin-a po ren, "oh my goo-ness! ((stress on '-ness'))" ni zhi dao le, ni zhi dao ta de, ni zhi dao ta de yu yan shi she me. ni zhi xu yao zhe-ang yi dian. zai che shang[defric] ni yao cai ta y-xia, ((imitating someone screaming in pain)) "*eya! eyo!*" jiao le, jiao ta zhe bian, "oh my goo-ness!" ((E laughs)) ni -iu [jiu] zhi dao le. ta ta- ta de preference ((stress on first and second: 'pri'fer'ence))yi xia -iu [jiu] ke yi kan dao le.

There's a cup of water. Suddenly, I knock it over. A Mainland Chinese would definitely say, "*eyo wo (de) tian ah!*". A Singaporean, "oh my goo-ness!" You'll know, you'll know his, you'll know what is his [preferred] language. All you need is this [i.e. to determine what language they prefer to communicate in]. On the bus, if you were to [accidentally] step on someone's foot, ((imitating someone screaming in pain)) [A Mainland Chinese would] scream "*eya! eyo!"* ; over here, "oh my goo-ness!" Then you'll know. You'll be able to tell his hi- his [language] preference [through that one instant].

William's comment above was representative of how most of the Chinese speakers in the study perceived disparity between the language variety or varieties which they would normally use and the one or ones which Chinese Singaporeans would use. In any given interaction with Chinese Singaporeans, the Mainland Chinese speakers had to learn to make language choices as appropriate to the speech context. William's conversation with a fellow Mainland Chinese coworker in Example (16) below nicely demonstrated that making the choice between the use of Mandarin and English was not always clear-cut for some speakers.

(16) WL= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC), talking with L, a coworker from Southern China.

WL: **da de shi hen gan ga** ni zhi-ao ((dao)) ma. ru-o ((ru guo)) ni yao jiang ying wen, ta jiu hui jiang, "wah!"
L: *awh*.
WL: **"ni shi zhong guo ren, vei ((wei)) she me yao jiang ying wen?"**
L: eh eh e:h, wo jiao ni yi ge qiao men. **wo sang ((shang)) de si ((shi)) wo xian-ai bu ceng -ou ze wen ti le. wo sang ((shang)) qu, wo ting ta ting se me sou ((shou)) yin ji. ta ting hua yu sou ((shou)) yin ji wo jiu gei ta jiang zong ((zhong))wen. ta ting ying yu de wo gei ta jiang ying wen. hen jian dan. ta mei you yi dian yi jian.**
WL: yao bu kai shou yin ji ne?
L: //bu kai ni bu suo hua.
WL: //bu shuo hua *law!*

WL: D'you know? **It is very awkward to ride in a taxi.** If you were to speak English [to the taxi driver], he will say, "wah!"
L: ((back-channeling))
WL: "you're a Mainland Chinese, why are you speaking English?"
L: eh eh e:h let me teach you a trick. These days, I don't have this problem when I get in a taxi. As soon as I get in, I will listen to determine what radio station the driver is listening to. If he's listening to a *huayu* [=Mandarin] station, then I will speak to him in *zhongwen* [i.e. Chinese language=Mandarin]. If he's listening to an English station, I will speak to him in English. It's very simple. He will not be able to question [my language choice].
WL: What if the radio isn't turned on?
L: //if it's not on, then don't say anything.
WL: //don't speak a word *law*!

William's conflict in deciding between English and Mandarin when speaking with Chinese Singaporean taxi drivers provided a glimpse of how speakers had to daily juggle the use of language varieties in the Singaporean context. Noting that local taxi drivers would censure his use of English (that is, in the case that he was using English with a Mandarin-speaking driver), William expressed frustration that Singaporean taxi drivers (and perhaps other Singaporeans) could distinguish him as an outsider presumably because his use of English gave away an accent that was marked to Singaporean speakers. William's dilemma about which language to use therefore was not just dependent on the context in question but, additionally, hinged on how taxi drivers would perceive him by his language choice. This example thus indicated that the language choices from one interaction to the next in multi-lingual Singapore required speakers to know which language was appropriate to use in a particular context. In the case of riding in a taxi, as suggested by William's coworker, it was best to listen for the taxi drivers' language preference and then select the language variety to use accordingly by accommodating. Through this example, I assume that the goal of William, along with other speakers who related similar anecdotes demonstrating their confusion at which language to use, was to somehow make appropriate language choices in different speech contexts with Singaporeans.

It is noteworthy that Grace, Jane, Lyn, Yan, Shell, Sihui, Ying, and Anna also exhibited consensus with William in reporting that they had to carefully negotiate their use of language in interactions with taxi drivers. These speakers were well aware of certain negative stereotypes which were associated with the Mainland Chinese in Singapore, such as 'job-stealers' or in extreme cases, 'gold-diggers' or loose and

promiscuous women[16] (Ho, 2003; Mak & Ho, 2004; Meijdam, 2001). Therefore, with their use of Mainland Mandarin possibly calling unnecessary attention to their nationality and potentially linking them with those blanket stereotypes, most of the speakers stated that their preference was to use English instead. Some speakers, when using English, might still be recognizable to Singaporeans as Mainland Chinese, as implied in William's remark in Example (16) that he might be chided by Singaporean taxi drivers for speaking English, given that he is a Mainland Chinese; nevertheless, most speakers reported using English because, most of the time, Singaporean taxi drivers would assume that their use of English signaled that they had picked up local linguistic practices from living in Singapore for a long period of time and would thus treat them more like locals than foreigners.

Some speakers claimed that by not using Mandarin, they were more likely able to withhold their nationality from Singaporean taxi drivers than if they spoke Mandarin; hence, this strategy sometimes saved them the trouble of having to defend what they were doing in Singapore. Grace, Anna, Lyn, and Ying (all female), for instance, reported having had unpleasant interactions with Singaporean taxi drivers as a result of having been singled out for their nationality. As a move to avoid unwanted attention, speakers like Grace stated that she would use English to convey destination names to Singaporean taxi drivers and, thereafter, kept conversation to a minimum, using English at all times; in

[16] The gold-digging and promiscuous stereotypes tended to be associated with women. In the three to four years leading up to and during my fieldwork in Singapore, widespread publicity in the local media portrayed certain groups of Mainland Chinese women as engaging in prostitution or having affairs with married Singaporean men, even though only a small subset of Mainland Chinese women actually engaged in such activities. *Pei du ma ma* 'study mothers', i.e. Mainland Chinese mothers who were chaperones to their young children studying in Singapore, became a stigmatized label as some of those women were exposed as taking on jobs linked with the skin trade (cf. Ho, 2003; Mak and Ho, 2004). As well, made notorious by a quasi-autobiographical book entitled *Wu ya* 'Crow' by a Mainland Chinese woman about young Chinese women out to prey on rich Singaporean men (cf. Meijdam, 2001), Mainland Chinese women living in Singapore, sadly, were talked about with suspicion or derision by Singaporeans.

not using Mandarin at all, she felt that she could stave off unwanted negative attention from the taxi drivers.

4.5.2 What local features to use?

Beyond choosing between language varieties, speakers also had to navigate the use of linguistic features. For example, if Mandarin were to be used in a particular context, depending on the degree to which a speaker wished to align with Singaporean speakers, he or she would utilize Singaporean language features rather than drawing wholesale on his or her native Mainland Mandarin resources.

Perhaps because of the speakers' frequent interactions with Singaporeans in their professions, the question of which language to use might have been closely linked with how to construct oneself as a credible player in the language interaction, evidenced by the use of not just any English variety, but an unmarked variety of English involving the use of local lexical items and constructions. Similarly, because their Mainland Mandarin accents tended to give away their language background and nationality, many speakers had devised strategies to minimize dialectal differences in order to be "easily understood" by the locals, if not to blend in with them. Oftentimes, when speaking Mandarin, 'to be easily understood' meant that speakers reduced the speed at which they spoke, using "simple" terminology, or peppering their utterances with local Mandarin discursive features, such as clause-final (or utterance-final) particles *lah* or *hanh* (phonetically transcribed as [la] and [hã] respectively), as exemplified by Gillian's statement in Example (17) below.

(17) Particles as appropriate for use in local speech context
G= Gillian, female, mid-twenties, from Hubei (SC); E= Er-Xin

G: bi ru shuo ***'lah, lie'*** ze ((zhe)) xie, *anh*. ze ((zhe)) xie yin diao wo jue de, qi-i ((shi)) zai xin -a po lai shuo hen pu tong ah.

'for example ***lah, lee-eh*** ((using an utterance-final particle which does not actually sound like locally used particle)), these kinds [of local language features], yes. These kinds of tones and accents ((referring to the particles)) I find are very common in Singapore.'

E: m.

G: **suo yi, ru guo ni yao yong, ((clicks)) hao xiang ben di de nei xie, se cai de, zi wo jue de hui geng tie qie yi dian.**

'therefore, if you were to use ((clicks)) like those local words, I feel they are more appropriate [for the local speech context].'

To sum up, a large majority of the speakers acknowledged the importance of using local language resources in their interactions with Singaporeans. While some speakers used local linguistic resources to integrate into the culture, others adopted a more practical or instrumental attitude whereby their primary goal of using local linguistic features was not primarily to integrate but to enable them to avoid unsolicited, negative attention from local speakers in daily interactions.

4.6 BEING ON THE MARGINS OF THE SINGAPOREAN SPEECH COMMUNITY

Some of the Chinese speakers' portrayal of themselves as being easy targets of unnecessary judgment for their use of Mainland language features by local taxi drivers who harped on their nationality conveyed that they sometimes perceived themselves as being pushed to the margins of the Singaporean linguistic community. The speakers' use of local language resources, sort of as a defense mechanism, was reminiscent of linguistic *passing* (Bucholtz, 1995) or even *crossing* (Rampton, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999).

Both of these concepts connote a movement from one social category into another, where individuals are foremost already in the margins of boundaries between

social categories and are constructed as *liminal* (Turner, 1974, as cited in Rampton, 1995, 1996, 1999), that is, of an in-between, neither-here-nor-there status. Individuals may suspend their full association with a social group and temporarily *adequate* themselves with another group, where "to be positioned as alike, they need not…be identical, but merely be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 311). The fact that local language resources might have been used by the speakers in specific moments or contexts to temporarily suspend their actual membership category as 'Mainland Chinese' to avoid negative judgment from local speakers, if only for the first moments of interacting with a local taxi driver, might have suggested their temporary movement across nationality boundaries.

The Chinese speakers in this study shared a common ethnic background as Chinese Singaporeans. Since the Chinese speakers already possessed many of the same physical characteristics as the local Chinese, they were not, as such, ethnically ambiguous with respect to the Singaporeans, in the way that passing has normally been denoted as a function of *ethnic* ambiguity (Bucholtz, 1995). I suggest that in the context of the Mainland Chinese speakers coming across as Singaporean, passing was a function of how speakers carried themselves in way of dress and in language use. Indeed, many of the speakers indicated an awareness of subtle differences between themselves and Chinese Singaporeans in terms of skin tone,[17] dress styles, and mannerisms, not to mention use of language.

[17] Many speakers reported that the Southern Chinese tended to have a darker complexion than the Northern Chinese, which they attributed to the warmer climate in the south of China, where more activities took place outdoors than in the more temperate north. Given that Chinese Singaporeans were originally descended from Southern China as well as were exposed to the sunny climate near the equator, the speakers found that Mainland Chinese from Southern China were thus closer in complexion to Chinese Singaporeans than those from Northern China.

To illustrate, Anna and Ying described that when they first came to Singapore, their initial reactions to Singaporeans' style of dress was that it was overly casual. These two women noted that women in China would always wear ankle-high nylon stockings—even when wearing open-toed, strappy sandals—whenever they stepped out in public. Since their arrival, both women had made some active choices to separate themselves from their past practices and had consequently succeeded in looking more local in their outward appearances. Anna's 'success', as it were, can be demonstrated by the fact that when her then kindergarten-age daughter, who only recently moved from China to live with her in Singapore, was reportedly appalled that she had left the house not wearing stockings with her sandals. Thus, this distinctive feature of dress made it easy for speakers like Grace and Anna to tell other Mainland Chinese women who followed traditional practice apart from local Singaporean women; along the same vein, a simple act of modifying one's way of dress enabled one to project sameness with the locals, at least in terms of appearance.

However, although some speakers managed to construct a local identity through making small changes to the way they dressed, a small number of them were not as successful. For instance, Charles related an incident in which a Singaporean stranger had walked up to him while he was waiting for the MRT (i.e. a subway train), and without even hearing Charles speak, introduced herself as a travel agent and proceeded to offer him discounted airfare back to China. Charles was perplexed by the fact that he was easily differentiated as a Mainland Chinese, because he did not think he dressed any differently from Chinese Singaporeans. Ultimately, he presumed that it was his fairer skin that made him stand out in the crowd of ethnically Chinese faces. As such, phenotypical differences among the Han people further call into question the homogeneity of Chineseness. Having been easily distinguished as a non-local by Singaporeans, Charles

indicated carefulness in his language selection; perhaps by making language choices appropriate for local speech contexts, he could then mitigate the image to Singaporeans of him being a foreigner, as seen by his outward appearance. In the following excerpt, he stated that Singaporeans' dislike for Mandarin was one of the main factors guiding his use of English in speech exchanges with Chinese Singaporeans, even though he personally preferred to use Mandarin over English.

(18) Using English with unfamiliar people
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

Ch: ru guo shi, kan mian kong, bu shou de ren uh, ru guo kan mian kong jiu ri ((shi)) hua ren de hua, (2.5) **hen bu shou de ren wo hai shi hui xian yong ying wen. yin wei wo gan jue ta men, ni hen duo ren bu xi huan yong ho- yong han yu uh**. suo yi, shou ren de hua, ru -uo ((guo)) zhi dao ta neng jiang zhong wen, na, na jiu mei wen ti=wo jiu, wo jiu zhi jie yong zhong wen.

If it is, by looking at the faces [of] people who are unfamiliar to me, if they look like *hua ren* [=ethnic Chinese people], (2.5) **I would still speak English with them first if I really don't know them. Because I feel that they, a lot of people do not like to use *han yu* [=language of the Han Chinese, i.e. Mandarin Chinese].** Therefore, [if I'm speaking with] people familiar to me, if I know that they can speak *zhong wen* [=Chinese language], then, then there's no problem=I will, I will speak with them directly in Mandarin.

In explaining why English was used as the default language in his interactions with unfamiliar Chinese Singaporeans, as indicated in bold in his remark above, Charles conveyed that his choice of local language varieties was not merely random, but rather motivated by how he felt Singaporeans would react to him. Thus, I propose that his deference to Chinese Singaporeans' preferred language was, in a way, a means of crossing boundaries between being Mainland Chinese and being Singaporean, thereby enabling him to negotiate a local identity in spite of evident distinctions in appearance between him and the local Chinese.

However, it should be noted that like linguistic crossing in Rampton's terms, which does not signal identification with the "other" group, Charles' use of local language features, while seemingly appearing to be a way of passing as a local speaker, did not mean that he identified with the local Chinese. In the following chapters, I shall explore in greater detail how Charles, along with other Mainland speakers, conveyed their allegiance to Mainland China by relating to or drawing on Singaporean ritual practices or language resources.

Having put forth the notion that many of the Chinese speakers might have engaged in passing in their outward appearance or language use, I should clarify that linguistic passing tends to be a way of claiming one's intrinsic access to one's adopted linguistic resources (Rampton, 1997). Language crossing, on the other hand, does not assume that individuals make such claims about the features they adopt or about their identification with the group into which they cross; although, as Rampton (1997) suggested, crossing can lead to passing, because the "multivalent processes of socio-symbolic repositioning" (p. 8) in crossing de-stabilize the negotiation of inter-group boundaries and thus allow for speakers to lay claims to natural links to adopted features. In the examples of Mainland speakers using English in Singapore or dressing more like Singaporeans than like Mainland Chinese, it seems that they could be engaging in passing, crossing, or both processes.

The above reported moments of temporary adoption of local ways of dress or use of local language varieties are valuable in helping to uncover the fluid nature of language use in identity construction. However, they provide just one dimension of speakers' language behaviors: that reported by the speakers. I seek to integrate this dimension with speakers' language ideologies and their linguistic behaviors to paint a fuller picture of the Mainland Chinese speakers' language use in Singapore. As I shall discuss in the next

chapter, the speakers' ideological construction of their stances in relation to Singaporean practices did not always reflect their identification with Singaporeans. In Chapters 6-8, I examine the speakers' use of local and non-local language resources in light of their ideological constructions of identification with, or differentiation from, Singaporeans.

Chapter 5: Ideologies and social positionings with respect to cultural practices in Singapore

Chinese-speaking communities around the world are often described as interconnected via a diasporic network of transnational ties to Mainland China. One way in which the network of Chinese societies is generally perceived by non-Chinese societies has been a sense of cohesiveness amongst China and neighboring East Asian Chinese societies (i.e. Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore), exemplified by the non-Chinese societies' referencing of these four Chinese societies as 'greater China' (Ong, 1997, 1999). Within the Chinese network, these four societies have been constructed collectively as 'cultural China' (Tu, 1994), whose cultural influence extends to other communities with smaller representations of ethnic Chinese. Such labels imply cohesiveness and a degree of coherence among these societies in their manifestation of various aspects related to the *Han* culture.

This chapter investigates the extent to which this assumed coherence among Chinese communities relates to identity construction among Mainland Chinese speakers in the study. The speakers were situated in a Chinese cultural context which was new to them on several levels. At one level, as the Chinese in Singapore were mainly descended from a few Southern Chinese provinces, the linguistic heritage of many local Chinese was in the form of languages spoken in those parts of Southern China (See Section 4.1, p.58). Some of the speakers, particularly those from other regions, had to contend with not being able to communicate in those languages. At another level, the Chinese speakers reportedly had to adjust to using English as the dominant language and adapting to the codeswitching practices and a different variety of Mandarin used among the local ethnic Chinese. Last but not least, with respect to culture, a portion of Singapore's population of

ethnic Chinese still observed traditional Chinese ritual practices, allowing some of the speakers to revisit traditions that had been attenuated in the late 1960s to 1970s in their homeland, following efforts during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution to eradicate so-called imperialistic, old thinking.[18]

I examine discourses by the speakers about Chinese traditions which have reportedly "disappeared" in China but were sustained in Singapore. These speakers reminisced nostalgically about Chinese traditions, regardless of whether they had personally engaged in similar cultural traditions while in China. This chapter also investigates speakers' ideologies about everyday cultural practices and speaker's positioning relative to local Singaporeans and to Mainland Chinese. In light of how Chinese Singaporeans were constructed as engaging in authentic cultural practices but not speaking Mandarin well or authentically, this chapter also seeks to investigate how ideologies about local practices point to the speakers' construction of their own Chinese identity as distinct from that of Chinese Singaporeans.

Most of the discourses examined in this chapter were extracted from group interviews, in which speakers were asked to make observations about similarities and differences of ways in which Chineseness was exhibited by Singaporeans and Chinese nationals. The discourses thus obtained consisted of two main themes being compared

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18 Traditional practices were deemed superstitious acts framed by the Communist Party of China, then led by Mao Zedong, as 'old ideas' used by the overthrown Bourgeoisie "to corrupt the masses, capture their minds and endeavour to stage a comeback" (Decision concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Official English version adopted on August 8th 1966), cited in Rojas (1968: 430).)

Propaganda from the 1966-1976 era suggested that 'old thinking' needed to be obliterated in order to stop the perpetuation of 'semi-feudal culture', as noted by Stafford (2000: 130):

> In China, there is still a semi-feudal culture [*ban fengjian wenhua*], which is a reflection of a semi-feudal government, and a semi-feudal economy. It promotes respect for Confucius [*zun Kong*], reading of the classics [*du jing*], the old ethics [*jiu lijiao*], and the old thinking [*jiu sixiang*]. Those who are opposed to the new thinking and the new proletarian culture are its representatives…

among the speakers: ritual practices and characterizations of Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese based on other social practices. Discourses about language practices analyzed in this chapter were separately obtained from one-on-one interviews.

5.1.1 Shared Cultural *Roots*: Construction of Ideologies of Chinese traditions

Discourses on Ritual Practices

During one particular small-group discussion, Chan reflected upon a Chinese festival that was once celebrated with great pomp in his hometown in Fujian, a southern region in China from which a majority of Chinese Singaporeans are descended. Drawing from memories of his childhood, he narrated the folklore behind the 'Ghost Festival' as well as painted a detailed picture of how the festival used to be observed during his grandparents' time but not anymore among the present generation of Mainland Chinese nationals. His memory of the lived experiences of his childhood were refreshed once again by virtue of his living in Singapore, where the 'Ghost Festival' was still being observed by the local Chinese.

(19) Chan's memories of Chinese traditions from his grandparents' time
C= Chan, male, early thirties, from Fujian (SC[19])

C: uh, bi bi ru suo ((shuo)) *ta-e ((men))* xiang *ze ((zhe))* *bian* bai, bai yi xie dong xi. qi si, wo ye ye nai nai ta men bai de. dan si ((shi)) zai wo men ze-i ((zhe yi)) dai[20] wo men bu bai de.

For example, *they here* (Chinese Singaporeans), like, pray to certain things. Actually, that's what my grandparents did. But *our* generation, *we* do not do it.

In Example (19), Chan revealed generational differences in traditional worship practices in China, but stated that practices from a previous generation were still

[19] NC= Northern China; SC= Southern China
20 Phrases related to (comparisons of) time are underlined; phrases, deictic terms associated with place (either China or Singapore) or pronouns associated with Chinese and Singaporeans are italicized.

maintained by Chinese Singaporeans. Traditional practices once valued positively in China's past were valued positively in Singapore by virtue of a perceived continuity through Singaporeans' maintenance of China's past practices. Chan used *zhe bian*, meaning 'here', to refer to Singapore, and deictic pronouns such as *ta men* 'they' to distinguish Singaporeans from *wo men* 'we/our', referring to himself and also speaking for those from the Mainland.

In many of the speakers' discourses the use of deictic terms almost always signaled distance between themselves and Singapore and the local Chinese. While Singapore was indeed a place linked with the remembering of ritual practices of China's past, thus helping many of the speakers identify with Singaporean practices, their frequent use of 'they/them', referring to Chinese Singaporeans, versus 'we/us', referring to Mainland Chinese, indicated a certain degree of saliency in regard to differences between the Mainland speakers and the local Chinese who actually engaged in the practices.

The speakers also used *zhe bian* 'here' or *zhe ge difang* 'this place' to discursively define Singapore as the local context in which they were physically situated. However, they almost never used 'there' or 'that place' to reference China, instead using *zai zhong guo* 'in China' or *guo nei* 'country's interior', a label analogous to 'stateside' as it is used in America, which in theory, does not directly refer to a particular country but is widely understood as 'China's interior'. The speakers' use of the non-deictic labels conveyed affective closeness to the Mainland, whereas the use of deictic labels for the local context indicated it as perhaps a physical space and a reference point from which to reminisce China's ritual past.

Speakers not only contrasted the presence of Chinese practices in Singapore with their absence in present day China, but also made favorable comments about the

preservation of Chinese traditions among Singaporeans, as exemplified in (20). Chan valued the maintenance of traditions in Singapore more highly than changes to traditional practices that have taken place in China.

(20) Singaporean traditions are "better preserved"

C: *ta* yi xie cuan ((chuan)) tong de dong xi, **bao cun ((chun)) de bi -ao hao.** bu, bu hui xiang *guo nei* yi jing xian zai yi jing gai bian le hen duo.

Some of *its* traditional things, are **better preserved** (than in China), unlike *in China*, where nowadays there's been huge changes.

Intensifying adverbs were also frequently coupled with positive markers, such as "really," "very," or "extremely good" in (21) and (22), and thus suggested the speaker's positive alignment with the local ritual practices.

(21) Feeling a sense of renewed memory of China's past traditions

C: xiang wo wo, mei yi lian ((nian)) gui jie wo zai *ze ((zhe)) bian* wo jiu jue -e ((de)), "*aiya*", wo suo ((shuo)) zen ((zhen)) de **hen you nei zong ((zhong)),** nei zong ((zhong)) jiu si ((shi))//xiao si ((shi)) hou de, xiao si ((shi)) hou gen nei zong ((zhong)),

Like, I, I, every year during the 'Ghost Festival' I'm *here* and I'll feel, aiya (emotive particle), there's **really a sense of that**, that, that is, during my childhood that kind of,

W: …

C: ne- you you na nong ((zhong)), nei zong ((zhong)), s-, cong xin si ((shi)) qi na zong ((zhong)) hui yi de nei nong ((zhong)) gan jue. ( ) **hui ((fei)) cang ((chang)) de bu cuo.**

There's that kind of, that kind of, sense of a renewed memory. **It's very nice**.

(22) Feeling good about seeing Chinese traditions in Singapore

C: *ah* wo jue de hen bang *eh* hui ((fei)) cang ((chang)) hao.

Ah I feel it's great, it's extremely good.

As demonstrated in the previous examples, this particular local Chinese tradition practiced in Singapore connected Chan in a personal way to his past, lived experiences with the 'Ghost Festival' in Fujian, China. Speakers from other regions of China who

lacked prior experience with the festival also took a positive stance similar to Chan's stance towards Singaporean ritual practices. In Example (23) Rubin and Wei compared Chinese and Singaporean practices in lines 1, 3, and 5, in particular, noting similarities. Degrees of comparison were also used to note how Singaporeans' practice of traditions "exceeded" that of Mainland Chinese (in lines 3 and 5). The diminishing practice of such traditions in China is also noted in line 7.

(23) Local traditional practices "exceeding" those in China
R= Rubin, male, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)
W= Wei, male, late twenties, from Inner Mongolia (NC)

1 R: wo ( ) jue de ta men de nege nege jiao she ma? nage zong jiao xing yang -hang ((sh)) hai shi you yi dian gen zhong guo (ren) you y-dian xiang si di fang.

I ( ) feel that *their*-- whatchamacallit? Their religious beliefs **tend to bear some similarities to Mainland Chinese**.

((Chan & Er-Xin mutter in background))

2 R: uh (jiu ru) shuo na ge jiao -ma ((she ma))? u:h, bai nai zho:ng, h- sh-mo sh-mo sh-mo shen↑ //(0.6) uh, //hen duo de.//

Uh (for example) whatchamacallit? U:h, praying to those, whatchamacallit god? (0.6) uh, there's lots of [people who do that].

3 W: //*zhe mian ((bian))* bu guang//bu guang shi:, uh he *zhong guo* yi yang. eR shi ge- ((geng)) sheng yu *zhong// guo*.

Over here not only are [their religious practices], uh, like in *China*, but they have surpassed [what is practiced in] *China*.

4 R: //dui. h h.
That's right.

5 W: yinw- *zai zhong guo* xian zai, dou bu-i ((bu hui)), bu hui xiang *zai xin-a po zhe mian ((bian))* zhe me **re zhong.**

Because in *China* now, [people] aren't as **fervent** as *in Singapore here*.

6 R: ((in his local dialect)) ni bei wo wen hua da ge ming gei DA guo yi ci le.

[China's] been hit by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution once.

7 W: …wo kan –an ((xian)) –ai ((zai)) –iuRu– ((jiu shi shuo)) *xin –a po*, ling wai hai you yi ge jiuR tai wan, *xin –a po* xiang gang zhe san (g)e di fang hanh, **bi *zhong guo* da lu de**, dui yu shen gui guai zhe –ie ((xie)) **xi–an ((xian z**ai)) **dou zeng gao le hen duo. zhe ge suan hua zu de te dian ba. jiuRiRuo ((shi shuo)) ni ni *zai zhong guo* sui ran xian–ai ((zai)) hen duo ren ye shuo bu xin le. xiang wo men zhen de shi wo, wo bu xin**.

… I think now it's like Singapore, and there's Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong these three places which, as compared to *Mainland China*, as far as [cultural knowledge of] gods, demons, angels, they're now [practicing] more. This has got to be a characteristic of Chinese culture. **I mean, in *China* these days, lots of people don't believe [those] anymore. Like us, like me, I don't believe.**

In the above excerpt, phrases such as *sheng yu zhong guo* 'surpassed practices in China', and *re zhong* 'fervent' in lines 3 and 5 indeed helped to construct the practice of Chinese religious acts among Singaporeans as positively regarded by Wei. As can be seen in line 6, Rubin's remark provided a reason as to why Singaporeans' practice of religious rituals might have "surpassed" the Chinese. Rubin constructed Mainland Chinese as having suffered a setback because of prohibitions to the practice of religious acts imposed during the onset of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. The framing of the passing down of traditions as having been curbed by the Cultural Revolution might thus be echoed by Wei in line 7. I argue that Wei's comment that he did not believe in traditional Chinese cultural figures was not meant to highlight differences between his beliefs and those of Chinese Singaporeans, but rather, to point out the consequences of the Revolution, perhaps, to a degree, conveying regret over the discontinuation of religious beliefs. Perhaps it was the case that many of the speakers, like Wei and Rubin, yearned for the continuity of ritual practices in China. The following quote from Charles Stafford's (2000) ethnographic report of contemporary Mainland Chinese might provide a clue as to how strongly Chinese nationals felt—and perhaps continue to feel—about

customs and rituals being kept alive in spite of antagonistic efforts to thwart their perpetuation:

> …many 'customary practices' (*fengsu xiguan)* had 'gone cold' (*leng*) since 1949, and particularly during and after the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (*wenhua da geming*). But I was also **repeatedly told**, and **in some cases by the very same people**, that **Chinese traditions had proved themselves 'unchangeable' (*gaibuliao*), and 'unprohibitable' (*jinzhibuliao*)**—in spite of considerable efforts to change and prohibit them
>
> (Stafford, 2000, p. 34; emphasis in bold mine)

The highlighted segments of the quote (in bold) reveal a considerable extent of fervency among the Chinese to want Chinese ritual practices to never stop being practiced. Given that the events that had taken place in China's recent history to disrupt this desired continuity were almost assuredly irreversible, many of these speakers, having found some (forms) of the practices to have continued in Singapore, indicated admiration of Singaporeans' ability to preserve the ritual practices. Importantly, the speakers perhaps expressed hope that Chinese Singaporeans, constructed as closely linked with the discontinued religious practices, would be the bridge between themselves and China's past ritual practices.

In (24) and (25) Shell and Charles both employed comparative structures using *bi…geng /hai…* 'compared to… more…," to indicate how local Chinese practices have exceeded even the standards for family values in China.

Ascribing traditional attributes to Singaporeans and their practices in conjunction with comparative markers *bi…geng/hai…* 'compared to… more…'

(24) *Higher* level of respect for the elderly among Singaporeans than Mainland Chinese
S= Shell, female, early thirties, from Guangdong (SC)

S: zun lao de z-yang zi yi ge chuan tong, hai shi bu cuo wo jue de. **bi *zhong guo ren* zuo de geng hao**.

The tradition of respecting the elderly is really quite well maintained, I feel. [They do it] **better than the Chinese.**

(25) *Stronger* family values
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

Ch: h-xiang *ta men* bi *wo men* hai jia ting guan nian hai yao nong. (('hai': intensifier adverb—'even more'))

It's like *they*, compared to *us*, have **stronger family values.**

Such statements portraying Chinese Singaporean ritual practices as favorable reflect the speakers' sense of pride over how certain aspects of the Chinese culture have been well-preserved outside of China. The reference to 'China', 'of China', or 'Chinese' was also frequently used, as in (26)-(28), to frame traditional practices in Singapore in a positive light.

Use of labels such as *ZHONG GUO* 'China' or *ZHONG GUO HUA* 'of China' in conjunction with positive intensifiers *HEN, FEI CHANG* 'very, extremely' or *TING* 'quite' to describe local practices

(26) Mainland Chinese deities
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

Ch: *ta men* bai de nei xie shen xian ah, she me de, hao xiang **ken ding shi**, zhi you ***zhong guo*** cai you.

The deities *they* pray to, whatchamacallit, are like, **for sure**, only found ***in China.***

(27) Local Chinese festivals
G= Gillian, female, late twenties, from Hubei (SC)

G: *ta men zhe bian* guo de, uh, hao xiang jie ah, hao xiang chun jie ah hai you duan wu jie, zhe xie, **hen *zhong guo hua***. hao xiang, u- ta men, um, hui chi zhong ((zong)) zi ah, chi yue bing ah, -ao nei ge xin nian de shi hou ah, na ta men de guo jie **fei chang *zhong guo hua***.

The festivals *they* celebrate *here*, such as Chinese New Year and 'Duanwu' festival, are **very much *like China's*.** For example, uh they, um, know to eat rice dumplings, mooncakes, and during Chinese New Year, the way they celebrate is **extremely *Chinese* (i.e. 'of China').**

(28) Mainland Chinese-like family values
S= Shell, female, early thirties, from Guangdong (SC)

S: *ta men* de jia ting guan nian qi shi dou **ting**, uh, ***zhong guo hua*** de.

Their family values are actually quite, uh, **quite**, uh, [like those of] ***Mainland Chinese*.**

The above examples reflect the speakers' willingness to associate local practices with China, rather than distinguish them from those in China. Speakers assumed the local practices to be more similar to than different from Mainland Chinese practices.

In (29) and (30), the use of an adverb of time YI JING 'already', indicating ongoing or completed action, in Gillian's remark: *yijing zai danhua* 'is becoming diluted' or Charles' *yijing meiyou le* 'no long exists', suggests that the trajectory of ritual practices in China was viewed as being headed towards loss over time.

Use of time adverbial *YI JING* to indicate the ongoing fading away of ties to ritual practices in China

(29) Chinese customs in Mainland China becoming diluted

G: *zhong guo* xian –ai you yi xie jie, jiu shuo hao xiang xi shu ((su)) dou **yijing zai danhua**.

Some festivals *in China these days*, like customs and such, have already become diluted.

(30) Certain practices no longer exist in China

Ch: *ta men* hao xiang **bi** *zhong guo*, zuo, dou zuo //**de geng** *zhong guo hua*, *ta men*,//**zhe xie hen duo *zhong guo* yijing meiyou le**.

They're like **compared** to *China*, doing things even **more** *Chinese* [than the Chinese], *their,* **a lot of these [practices] no longer exist *in China*.**

The statements in (29) and (30) signaled the attenuation of practices in China and contrasted with the statements in (23)-(28). Contrasted with the fact that Chinese traditions had been preserved in Singapore for well over a century, these speakers thus constructed Singaporeans' preservation efforts as a remarkable feat. In practically all of

the above examples presented so far the speakers positioned themselves positively in relation to the vitality of ritual traditions in Singapore. Charles summed up this sense of admiration for the local Chinese in Example (31):

(31) Admiration for Chinese Singaporeans' practice of traditional rituals

Ch: *ta men* **jian chi** *zhong guo de* chuan tong ah. **rang wo hen chi jing** uh. ((E laughs)) **wo dao jue de *ta men* ze me neng ba *zhong guo* de gu wen hua bao, bao cun dao zh-yang wan hao.**

[The fact that] *they've* maintained *China's tradition*, makes me very surprised. I wonder how it is possible that *they* are able to keep *China's* historic culture so well preserved.

Benedict Anderson has remarked that narratives of the imagined nation do not necessarily hinge on the authentic value of the recollections themselves (Anderson, 1983). Similarly, in the case of some of the above speakers, their imagination of China's past ritual practices was based on nostalgia and personal experience. Nostalgia was evoked through speaking about the present day vitality of a tradition—once contextualized in a familiar setting, now set in a different and less familiar cultural Chinese place. As Cavanaugh (2004) noted, for nostalgia to be meaningfully articulated, it needs the anchoring of perspectives from two different time points: the past and the present. The discourses analyzed indicate that the present did in fact serve as a vantage point for reminiscing one's cultural past. Moreover, it is the values assigned to practices that were linked to the past that gave value to practices associated with the present time.

In Table 5.1 I provide an overview of the values assigned to the various types of local practices by the Mainland speakers (See Sections 5.2 and 5.2.3 for a discussion of non-ritual and language practices). Among the Chinese Singaporean practices, only ritual practices corresponded in value with Mainland Chinese ritual practices. The absence or presence of the practices in China—both in the past and in the present—seemed to indicate whether the Mainland speakers would value the Singaporean practices. The Mainland speakers did not seem to regard local non-ritual or language practices as

positively as they did with ritual practices, as the first two types of practices were viewed as continuously practiced in China. On the other hand, ritual practices in Singapore were valued positively, just as the engagement in ritual practices in China used to be valued positively in the past, at least as constructed by those who actually had personal experiences of those practices.

Table 5.1 Values given by the Mainland speakers to various types of practices in Singapore

	China		**Singapore**
	Past	***Present***	***(Present assumed; treated as if the past were somehow traceable to Mainland China's past)***
Ritual practices	+	Absent (because of Cultural Revolution)	+ (among older Singaporeans)
Non-ritual practices	+	Generally + (but treated as more distant than before)	- (ignored)
Language practices	+ (treated as unchanging)		- (criticized—whether language varieties, competency, or ways of speaking, for example, indirectness, softspokeness)

As for those speakers who did not have personal experiences, it did not mean that nostalgia was not relevant to them. In fact, anchoring themselves in the same past and present time points as those speakers with lived experiences of the practices, the speakers with no lived experiences were able to co-construct nostalgia, and partake of the imagination of the past rituals. Hence, applying Anderson's point that the authenticity of recollections has no bearing on the imagination of communities and/or practices, it really did not matter if certain speakers did not know of the rituals practiced only in Southern

Chinia. What mattered for all the speakers that enabled their co-construction of nostalgic imagination was their shared belief in a common Chinese cultural heritage, reified discursively through their repeated references to China.

The speakers' favorable perceptions of Singaporean ritual practices in (19)-(31) signaled solidarity with Chinese Singaporeans at a level in which ritual practices were perceived as shared views of reality and the world between Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese. Viewing the ritual practices as hallmarks of Chinese culture, many of the speakers constructed continuity in the flow of the practices from their Mainland 'historical origins' to Singapore. This perceived continuity, it seemed, permitted the speakers to construct the ritual practices in Singapore as key links between themselves and China's past and, thus, to view Chinese Singaporeans as having similar cultural roots as theirs. Thus, many of the speakers positioned themselves very closely to the ethnic Chinese in Singapore.

As Coupland (2003) has noted, among the various dimensions that bring forth meaning to authenticity are historicity and consensus, that is, having "a high degree of acceptance within a constituency" (p. 419). In light of a common thread underlying the speakers' discourses linking Singaporean rituals with Mainland Chinese origins and even comparing Singaporean to Chinese rituals using superlative terms, it is evident that the Chinese ritual practices in Singapore were constructed as authentic. Furthermore, the speakers in fact constructed themselves as possessing the cultural expertise necessary for assessing the authenticity of the practices. Coupland also remarked that practices are authenticated only by individuals who are able to identify them as authentic; in doing the authentication, individuals thus construct their roles as persons with symbolic authority. In the case of some of the Northern speakers who had never participated in the Ghost Festival celebrated in Southern China, their discursive construction of the Singaporean

ritual practices as authentic was not actually based on their lived experiences. Nonetheless, they claimed knowledge of China's past by way of their status as natives of Mainland China. The claimed knowledge, it seemed, was the driving force behind their ability to validate Singaporean practices as well-preserved and authentic. Hence, their arbitration of Chinese ritual practices stemmed more from knowledge perhaps constructed as unsurpassed by outsiders to China (including Singaporeans) than from personal experience.

5.2 CONSTRUCTING CONTRASTS: SOCIAL CHARACTERIZATIONS OF SINGAPOREANS AND MAINLAND CHINESE

In this section, focusing on discourses in which social characteristics of Singaporeans were contrasted with those of Mainland Chinese nationals, I continue to explore how cultural arbitration is conveyed through the speakers' comparisons of other types of practices observed of nationals from the two countries. Unlike the speaker's judgments of Chinese Singaporean ritual practices, which were not necessarily based on speakers' lived experiences per se, their evaluations of other cultural practices hinged heavily on comparisons with their personal experiences. As such, the discourses in this section were predominantly based on speakers' testimonies and observations of Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese in everyday activities; speakers' subjective ideologies were revealed to a greater extent than they were in their discourses about ritual practices. Thus, in order to seek to demonstrate how speakers positioned themselves in relation to Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese in each discourse, I will present the discourses at a more micro level than those in the previous section.

Like their discourses on ritual practices, the speakers' discursive characterizations of social practices and behaviors comprised distinctive comparative terms such as 'more'

and ‘better’. In (32) the phrase *bi jiao*, a comparative adverb meaning ‘comparatively’, was used by Grace in her characterizations of Chinese nationals in line 1 and of Singaporeans in lines 6 and 8. Depending on whether the adjective following *bi jiao* had a positive or negative meaning, *bi jiao* can be roughly translated as ‘more’ or ‘less’ respectively. In this excerpt *bi jiao* in lines 1, 6, and 8 acted as a contrastive medium through which differences were constructed between Chinese nationals and Singaporeans. Opposing values were linked with the two groups through Grace’s claims that Chinese nationals were ‘more frank and outspoken’ and that Singaporeans were ‘less able to express themselves’ and ‘more cautious’.

(32) Using *bi jiao* to compare Singaporeans with Mainland Chinese
G= Grace, female, mid-thirties, from Beijing (NC)
YL= Yilin, female, mid-thirties, from Guangdong (SC)

1 G: wo shi jue de zhong guo ren ke neng **bi jiao xin zhi kou kuai**.

‘I feel that Chinese nationals are probably **more frank and outspoken**.’

2 uh you she me xiang fa jiu, gan gan shuo you- ji ben -hang ((shang)) ye bu guan -h- ((shen)) me chang he.

‘uh [when Chinese nationals] have opinions, [they would] talk it out boldly, basically regardless of the situation.’

3 ke neng shi yi qian de zhong guo, yi qian, zai yi xie te ding de zheng zhi de yin su ying xiang zhi xia ren men bu tai gan yu biao da.

‘perhaps [this is due to] China in the olden days, previously under certain specific influences from political forces, people did not particularly dare to express [themselves].’

4 dan shi xian zai, kai fang le suo yi, ren men, zai she me chang he dou gan shuo.

‘but now, [China has] opened up [politically] thus, people, [became] able to speak up under any circumstance.’

5 wu lun shi dui zheng zhi ye hao dui guo jia de ling xiu ye hao=dou you she me xiang fa dou gan gan shuo chu lai.

'no matter regarding politics or the leadership of the country=[people will] speak up if they have an opinion [about something].'

6 zai xin -a po da jia bi jiao SHENG yu,(1) //biao da zi ji *lah*.

'in Singapore people are more lacking in expressing self [=less able to express themselves] PART.'

7 YL: //yan xing *ah*.

'[their] words and actions PART.'

8 G: anh. bi jiao jing shen.
'PART ((in agreement)). [Singaporeans are] **more cautious.**'

9 jiu shi, jiu suan xin li you hen duo hua da jia bu yuan yi shuo chu lai.

'that is, even if in the heart[=in the mind] [one] has a lot to say about something, people are not willing to talk about what they think.'

10 jiu hao xiang "ni zhi wo zhi xin li zhi" jiu gou le.

'it is like it's sufficient if "you and I know what the heart knows".

11 bu yao biao da. zhe yang.

'[they] do not want to express [themselves]. This is how it is.'

The signaling of distinctions in the social characterizations of Mainland Chinese nationals and Chinese Singaporeans was primarily drawn on the oppositional properties thus constructed by the use of *bi jiao* in Grace's statements in lines 1, 6, and 8. Although additional statements were made in lines 2-5 and 8-11 as grounds for Grace's claims, it seemed the *bi jiao* expressions laid most of the groundwork for other speakers to highlight distinctions between the two groups of nationals, as seen by their construction of contrasts through the use of other *bi jiao* expressions and descriptive phrases indicating positive or negative value judgments. In line 12 the contrastive property of *bi jiao* was also used by Anna. On the basis of lines 12 and 13 alone it might seem that other than describing opposing characteristics of Singaporeans and Chinese nationals, the speaker's actual value judgments with respect to both groups were ambiguous, as 'more

rule-conscious' could signal either positive or negative appraisal, as could 'not having a strong conception of rules'. However, Anna had in fact modeled her comparison of Chinese nationals and Singaporeans on the use of *bi jiao* expressions, associating positive characterizations with the Chinese and negative ones with Singaporeans. Anna's agreement with Grace's evaluation of the Mainland Chinese not being rule-bound as being 'more free' in line 15 demonstrated that she indeed framed the statements of contrast in lines 12 and 13 in a way which paralleled Grace's characterizations of Chinese nationals and Singaporeans.

The values linked with the Chinese and with Singaporeans in Grace's discourse in lines 1-11 were carried forward into Anna's discourse, demonstrating the Bakhtinian notion that utterances are linked to other preceding utterances by way of other speakers' words (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). A word or an utterance spoken by one, as such, becomes "representative of another's whole utterance from a particular evaluative position" (Bakhtin, 1986: 89). In this discourse, the evaluative position implied in Grace's discourse was linked intertextually to Anna's, and as well to Ying's and Yilin's utterances in response in lines 17, 19, 21, and 24. Speakers' use of *bi jiao* in a way that indicates their negative evaluation of Singaporeans becomes even clearer at the end of the excerpt.

G= Grace, female, mid-thirties, from Beijing (NC)
YL= Yilin, female, mid-thirties, from Guangdong (SC)
A= Anna, female, early thirties, from Wuxi (SC)
Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)

12 A: hai you, xin jia po ren zuo shi hao-ang **bi jiao zhong gui ju**.

'as well, [when] doing things Singaporeans are like **more rule-conscious**.'

13 zhong guo ren de gui ju de gai nian bu shi hen qiang da.

'Chinese people do not have a strong conception of rules.'

14 G: bi, bi jiao zi you *lah*.

'[they are] **mo-, more free** PART.'

15 ((agreement from Anna))

16 G: **wo xing wo su** *lah*. ze ((zhe)) yang zi.

'able to do things without being limited by others PART. Like that.'

17 Y: **ta hui fa hui** *lah*. zai gui //ju shang **ta hui fa hui.**

'**they take initiative** PART. **They take their own initiative** with respect to rules [i.e. do not necessarily follow rules].'

18 G: //anh. //hui **bi jiao zi you yi dian.**

'PART ((in agreement)). [they tend to be] **a little more free.**'

19 YL: *anh* dui.

'PART ((in agreement)) that's right.'

20 G: uh, x- xin –ia po ren zuo shi hui bi jiao, //hui **bi jiao ju jin** *lah* anh.

'uh, [when doing things] Singaporeans tend to be more, **more over-cautious** PART PART ((in agreement)).

21 YL: //**si ban yi dian.** jiang de bu hao-

'**a little rigid**. To put it bluntly-'

22 ((agreement from all; laughter))

23 G: ( ) bi jiao ju jin *lah.*

'more over-cautious PART.'

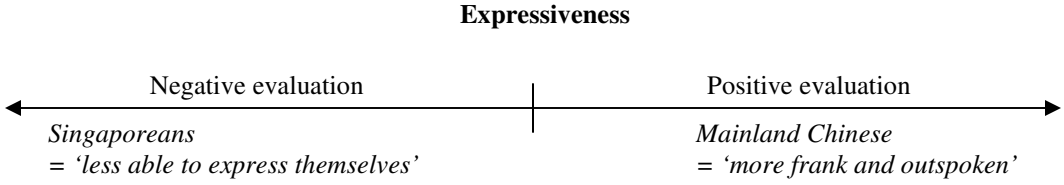
24 YL: anh ( ) .'PART ((in agreement)).'

The common appraisal of Chinese nationals and Singaporeans among the four speakers was woven together in part by Grace's repeated use of *bi jiao* expressions such as 'more free' (lines 14 and 18) and 'more over-cautious' (lines 21 and 23). The expressions in bold uttered by Anna, Ying, and Yilin which emphasized Mainland

Chinese as less restrained and able to take initiative versus Singaporeans as 'a little rigid' were thus reflective of intertextuality at play in the construction of the speakers' evaluative stances with respect to the two groups of nationals.

It is noteworthy that the stances conveyed by the comparative terms in the above excerpt and in the discourses about ritual practices differed. Speakers used *bi jiao* 'comparatively (more/less)' to compare semantic oppositions. *Bi jiao* does not always have to refer to semantic oppositions. It can have an adverbial meaning like 'rather' or 'quite' or indicate comparative degrees, as in *ta hen gao* 'he is tall' versus *ta* ***bi jiao*** *gao* 'she is **(comparatively)** tall**er**' or 'she is **quite** tall'. However, *bi jiao*, as it was used in the above example, primarily indicated semantically contrastive values rather than degrees of similarities or differences. For example, 'expressive' was linked with positive evaluation while 'less expressive', negative evaluation. The speakers' value judgments of expressiveness are represented by Figure 5-1(a). The arrows pointing in opposite directions reflect how, rather than used for constructing degrees of similarities, *bi jiao* was used by the speakers to construct differences in their judgments of characteristics of Mainland Chinese and of Chinese Singaporean in somewhat absolute, contrastive terms.

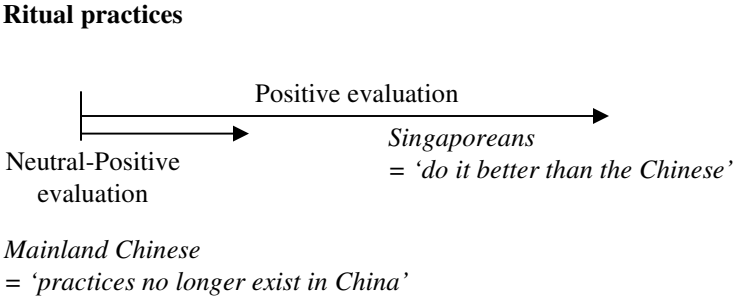
Figure 5-1(a) Use of *bi jiao* to negatively evaluate Singaporeans while positively evaluating Mainland Chinese



Ideologies generally seem to be constructed on such dichotomies in which self is projected as 'positive'; here, the speakers conveyed that they identified with Mainland Chinese in their expressiveness. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the speakers' positive evaluation of Singaporeans often surpassed even that of Mainland

Chinese, as shown in Figure 5-1(b). Instead of using *bi jiao*, the speakers actually used the *bi…geng/hai* comparative structure to note similarities—rather than absolute differences—in their positive judgments of ritual practices.

Figure 5-2(b) Use of *bi…geng/hai* to evaluate Singaporeans even more positively than Mainland Chinese



In the above case in which the speakers constructed themselves and other Mainland Chinese as sharing 'positive' characteristics, understandably, they constructed neither themselves nor other Mainland Chinese negatively. Through their consistent assignment of positive values to Mainland Chinese (and their practices) using these discursive comparative structures, we can see that they aligned themselves more with Mainland Chinese than with Singaporeans. Below, I examine other examples in which the putative separation of Mainland Chinese and Singaporean practices and speakers' positioning with respect to the two nationalities were constructed through discourse.

Speakers' positioning in relation to Chinese nationals and Singaporeans in discourses of non-ritual practices

In Example (32) above speakers appeared to construct distinct characterizations of Singaporeans vis-à-vis Chinese nationals. The speakers may have implied unambiguous affinity towards Mainland Chinese characteristics in the above excerpt. However, different social behaviors or practices can certainly invoke different attitudes in different individuals. In discourses about different practices or behaviors the speakers

demonstrated variability in the extent to which their comments indicated the way they positioned themselves with respect to Chinese nationals and Singaporeans. Some speakers, like Ying in Example (33), conveyed strong identity with the Chinese by drawing distinct lines that separated 'them' (i.e. Singaporeans) from 'us' (i.e. Mainland Chinese). In the example below a commonplace Mainland Chinese practice of talking loudly in public was constrasted with Singaporeans' softspokenness.

(33) 'Them' versus 'us'
Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)

Y: wo yin xiang zui shen de *hah*, jiu gen wo wo wo xian –ai [zai] wo dang chu gang lai de shi-ou. yin xiang zui shen de jiu shi **ta men shuo hua hen xiao sheng**. shuo hua HEN xiao sheng. wo gang lai de shi hou ren jia gen wo jiang she me wo dou yao wen duo ji ci wo cai ming bai ta zai jiang she me. ta TAI xiao sheng le wo ting bu ming bai. hao xiang **wo men** zai guo nei *hanh*, **da sheng jiang hua yi jing hen xi guan**=you shi zuo lao shi de. wo men jiang hua sheng yin hen DA de.

'my strongest impression PART, comparing now and when I first came. [my] **strongest impression was that they spoke very softly.** They speak VERY softly. When I first came and people spoke to me, I had to ask them to repeat a few times before I could make out what they were saying. They were TOO softspoken [so] I couldn't understand them. Like **us** in *guo nei* [=inside China] PART, [we are] **very used to speaking loudly**=especially those who are teachers. We speak very LOUDLY.'

Ying reportedly stated that the differences in volume of speech were most marked when she first came to Singapore and added later that she had since gotten used to Singaporeans' speech volume. However, the fact that she associated Mainland speakers being loud with her ongoing role as a teacher suggests that she was constructing her ability to speak loud as a teacher as overlapping with her identity as a Chinese national. Ying's teacher identity was constructed as remaining unchanged since her move to Singapore; by constructing speaking loud as a quality possessed by teachers in China, she implied that her ties to this particular Chinese behavior remained intact.

Other speakers' construction of their ties to either Mainalnd Chinese or Singaporeans was less clear-cut. In a separate interview context than that from which Ying's comments were extracted, Grace also noted distinction in the volume of speech between Chinese and Singaporeans. However, unlike Ying's positioning as closer to the Chinese than to Singaporeans, Grace's discourse framed neither of the groups as displaying more positive or negative characteristics than the other. A seemingly objective or neutral stance appeared to be constructed through her comments about both groups of Chinese, as shown in (34).

(34) "Objective" construction of Singaporeans' softspokenness
G= Grace, female, mid-thirties, from Beijing (NC)

1 G: unh hai you, bi ru shuo, (2) ke neng hen duo ren zai yi qi de shi-ou ***zhong guo ren*** **jiu hui you yi dian DA sheng. jiu hui gu ji zi-i de gan shou bu tai //gu ji bie ren.**

'and also, for example, (2) perhaps when a lot of people are gathered together [Mainland] Chinese people will be a little loud. They would care about how they feel, not so much about other people.

2 zhe ye shi hao ye shi bu hao lah.

'this is both good and bad.'

3 **-e sh- ((ke shi))** ***xin -a po ren*** **yi ban dou hui xiao xiao sheng shuo hua.**

'but Singaporeans will tend to speak very softly.'

4 **pa bie ren dui zi ji you bu hao de ying xiang.**

'afraid others will have bad impression of self.'

5 zhe ye shi shu yu, yi, yi fang mian shuo, ke neng, **gong de xin fang mian hui bi jiao, ZHONG shi yi dian**=

'this can be, on the one hand, perhaps [Singaporeans] place more importance on the area of social ethics.'

6 ze-i ((zhe yi)) fang mian ke neng **bi jiao ju jin.**

'on the other hand, [Singaporeans are] perhaps **more cautious.**'

7 **PA bie ren dui zi ji de, yan xing you, bu hao de yi jian.**

'afraid others will have negative criticisms of self's behavior.'

8 anh. zhe dou shi shuang fang mian de yin su law.
'((yes)). These are factors from both sides PART.'

In line 1 the Chinese practice of talking loudly was constructed by Grace as an undesirable characteristic. Her critique of the practice as selfish behavior might have reflected her distant positioning in relation to other Mainland Chinese. Yet her statement in line 2 suggested that the practice among the Chinese was not deprived of positive qualities and thus seemed to mollify the negative critique in line 1, signaling the construction of unbiasness to her judgment of the practice. A similar unprejudiced stance towards Singaporeans' talking behaviors was also conveyed in lines 3-8, in which both positive and negative aspects of the behaviors were commented upon. Grace's considerations of both positive and negative factors in her observations of Chinese and Singaporean talking behaviors suggested a construction of neutral positioning with respect to the Chinese and Singaporeans.

However, on further examination, Grace's critique of Singaporeans' talking behaviors was more in-depth than that of the Chinese. In lines 4 and 7 the phrase *pa bieren dui ziji* 'afraid [of] others [doing unto] self' was repeated, each time occurring with descriptive traits linked with negative approval from others, thus constructing Singaporeans as self-conscious. The construction of Singaporeans' self-consciousness as over-guarded was also evident in such description as 'more cautious'. Self-consciousness and over-guardedness were constructed as the very traits lacking among Chinese nationals. Thus, even though the positive aspect of talking loudly among the Chinese was not made explicit by Grace in line 2, it was emergent in the discourse through a contrast with her characterization of Singaporeans' behavior as not desirable.

Grace had evidently gained much insight into Singaporean behaviors—and adapted some—through the ten years that she had lived in Singapore. For instance, she reportedly talked less loudly in public in Singapore—a practice which Ying also said to have adopted; however, she also confessed that she might revert to her old habits were she to go back to China. Her talking about both good and bad sides of Singaporeans and Chinese nationals may indeed be reflective of her identification with both groups of nationals. In the above excerpt, Grace may have attempted to convey neutrality by making no overt indication of her affinity to either Mainland Chinese or Singaporeans. Although Grace might have tried to construct herself as a neutral observer of Mainland Chinese' and Singaporeans' behaviors by addressing both positive and negative aspects associated with the two groups of nationals, this excerpt showed that there was a subtle degree of difference in the emphasis placed on explicitly characterizing the weaknesses of Singaporeans than those of the Chinese. This subtle difference can be seen as signaling that Grace ultimately aligned herself slightly more with the Chinese than with Singaporeans in this particular discourse.

While it might be useful to discover the actual extent to which Grace was more aligned with Mainland Chinese than with Singaporeans, it is perhaps just as useful, if not more, to investigate the significance behind the interaction of what I call 'constructed neutrality' (or "objectivity") as indicated through speakers' use of certain discursive properties or frameworks and their emergent subtle positionings in relation to the two nationalities. Although not all speakers constructed "objective" positionings with respect to Chinese and Singaporean practices to the extent that Grace did by attempting to portray both positive and negative aspects of the practices, most of the speakers shared commonalities in constructing "objectivity" to an extent such as can be evident through their metadiscursive practice.

To illustrate, discourses such as Rubin's commentary in Example (35) below comparing Mainland Chinese to Singaporeans typically consisted of speakers' subjective opinions about both groups of nationalities and their respective practices. However, through the metadiscursive statements as exemplified in line 3, speakers demonstrated momentary distancing from their subjective discourses. In (35) Rubin's comment about his limited understanding of Singaporeans' work habits in line 3 followed his detailed construction of Singaporeans as projecting busyness and seriousness in their work, yet, according to him, leading very mundane lives in actuality. Rubin's disalignment from Singaporeans was thus conveyed in lines 1-2 and also in line 4. However, the metadiscursive remark in line 3 signaled his momentary distancing from his comments about Singaporeans.

(35) Likening Singaporeans to machinery parts
R= Rubin, male, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)

1 R: xin –a po ren hen duo shi zai yi ge ji qi –hang ((shang)) de yi ge ling jiaR: yi ((ling jian eR yi)). (2.5) hen duo sh–ou shi zai, gong zuo huo shi zai, (2.5) ((coughs)) ta men ba gong zuo kan de hen zhong…

'Many Singaporeans are merely [like] parts in a machine. Often at work or-, they are [too] serious about work.'

2 (3.5) wo bu jue –e [de] ta men hui you na m–duo gong zuo zuo ((chuckles)). *unh* zai: (1.5) ye yu sheng huo fang mian gan jue ta men hao–ang [xiang] ye bu shi tai (h–) hen duo shi jian shi zai kan xi. chi fan. (2.5) wo hen duo peng you y–=xin –a [xin jia po] peng you–e [ye] shi=*ah* zai qu chi fan. chi guo fan. xia ban zhi hou chi fan. qi dian –ong [zhong] ba dian –ong [zhong] kai –hi ((shi)) chi fan. chi dao jiu dian duo da jia hui qu kan –ian ((dian)) shi shui jiao j– [jiu] zh–ya– ((zhe yang)).

'I don't think they actually have that much work to do. Um as for how they spend their leisure time I feel they are also not very- most of the time they just go to the movies. [They] go out to eat. My many friends=Singaporean friends=go out to eat. After eating. After work, they go out to eat. They eat at seven or eight o'clock. At around nine o'clock everyone goes home to watch TV or sleep.'

3 **dan wo wo liao jie bing bu shi b-i ((bu shi)) quan mian *lah*.**

'but my, my understanding of the situation isn't comprehensive part.'

4 (5.5) xin -a po ren -hi [shi] ke neng na ge, (1.8) chuang xin de yi shi mao xian de yi shi tai, **shao le yi dian**…

'Singaporeans maybe, have **a little bit less** of a sense of adventure…'

5 dan zhong guo ren ne, (2) dan zhong guo ren ne, (2) gen xin -a po ne j- bi qi lai jiu -i ((shi)) shuo shi, you xie fang mian ke neng bi xin -a po ren hui xian- [de] jiuR ((jiu shi)), mm, (1.5) **kan de bi jiao yuan yi dian**=hui **bi -iao ((jiao)) da fang yi dian**…

'but Mainland Chinese, Mainland Chinese, as compared to Singaporeans, in some respects they may seem to, mm, **look further ahead=**[they are] **more relaxed**…'

Rubin's acknowledgement of the limitations of his subjective opinions signaled the recognition of weaknesses in his claims. His momentary distancing of himself from the negative critiques of Singaporeans thus conveyed an air of "objectivity" from a personal claim he made just prior. I suggest that the "objectivity" functioned as a temporary face-saving act (Goffman, 1955), that is, to allow for potentially positive social values to be constructed for the subjects under criticism, so that ultimately he had an "out" should his statements have offended other Singaporeans or me. The widespread extent to which Rubin and other speakers qualified their discourses with disclaimers to construct momentary distance from their negative characterizations of Chinese Singaporeans indicated that many of the speakers were aware of their disalignment from Singaporean practices yet, many exhibited the cultural practice of minimizing the potential face threat of acknowledged difference. I argue that the momentary distancing of speakers from their own subjective opinions reflect their careful positioning of themselves within the Singaporean context, perhaps so as not to signal too big a social gulf between Chinese Singaporeans and themselves. Although their foreign identity was salient to many of them, as seen by their alignment with Mainland China in their positive

characterizations of China and Chinese nationals, some speakers like Grace appeared to hedge that association by constructing "objectivity" with respect to Mainland Chinese practices. Such disalignment from Chinese practices may also reflect their careful positioning as Chinese speakers in Singapore, again, perhaps so as not to convey too great of a social distance with Singaporeans.

As exemplified by the different extents to which "objectivity" with respect to Chinese and Singaporeans was expressed by speakers like Grace and Rubin, there was a range of variability among many of the speakers in the degrees to which a 'middle ground' was constructed. By 'middle ground', I do not mean that speakers' positionings were equidistant from the Chinese and Singaporeans, but rather I draw on its close association with 'compromising' (as in "finding the middle ground") to refer to an intermediate zone where identity or social positioning is negotiated. Thus, 'middle ground' may represent an ideological space in which speakers 'check'—whether consciously or unconsciously—that their alignments with the Chinese and Singaporeans respectively are not too skewed towards one group or the other. The 'middle ground' may also represent a liminal space in which speakers find themselves in a place of transition where their positioning is neither strictly aligned with Mainland Chinese nor with Singaporeans, that is, where speakers are socially "neither here nor there" (Rampton, 1999). In either case, the middle ground signifies speakers' negotiated positionings induced by a tension between aligning with the Chinese and with Singaporeans.

As I will discuss further in the chapters that follow on speakers' use of Chinese and Singaporean language resources, being in the 'middle ground' may perhaps translate to the use of linguistic features from *both* China and Singapore, instead of features associated with *just* one country or the other. Having presented speakers' attitudes towards Mainland Chinese and Singaporeans with respect to ritual as well as non-ritual

practices, the following section will consist of an investigation of speakers' ideologies about Singaporean linguistic practices.

5.2.2 Constructing distinction

Before I discuss the discursive construction of ideologies about linguistic practices in Singapore, I explore the different processes related to ideologies that might have shaped speakers' different stances towards the Chinese and Singaporeans. Bucholtz and Hall (2004b) have proposed *adequation,* the process of constructing sameness with other individuals, and *distinction*, the process of differentiating among individuals, as polar mechanisms of identification linked with *authentication* and *denaturalization* respectively. Adequation and authentication are related to the construction of an identity "through an affirmation of the qualities that ideologically constitute it" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004b: 494). Distinction and denaturalization, on the other hand, occur through "the foregrounding of qualities perceived as remote from the self or other."

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have shown that the speakers aligned with Mainland Chinese *and* Singaporeans in their discourses about ritual practices. The speakers' construction of sameness among Chinese nationals and Singaporeans, at times *even* constructing Singaporeans' practice of Chinese rituals as superior than the Chinese, reflected their adequation of Chinese Singaporeans with themselves. However, in their discourses of non-ritual practices many speakers exhibited, on occasion, moments of detachment from Mainland Chinese, portraying "objectivity" with respect to their characterizations of Singaporeans but on the whole aligning themselves more closely with Mainland Chinese than with Singaporeans. Hence, the speakers' construction of differences between Mainland Chinese and Singaporean behaviors with respect to day-to-

day practices signaled that they identified themselves as being distinct from Singaporeans.

The fact that some speakers had never engaged in certain traditions signaled a degree of tenuousness in their claims of being familiar with the ritual practices. However tenuous those claims might have been, those speakers constructed their cultural roots as being shared with Chinese Singaporeans. The speakers' adequation of Chinese Singaporeans, established through the construction of a common cultural past, appeared to be drawn on an ideology about 'culture' that differs from contemporary anthropological and sociolinguistic theorizing of it. Culture is theorized as composed of "context-dependent practices or forms of participation" (Duranti, 1997: 49) and "everyday practices and associated beliefs, ideas and values that characterize a particular community or group" (Swann et al., 2004: 68). However, all the speakers noted only specific essentialist practices, i.e. partaking in traditional customs and rituals and/or being able to speak and write *zhong wen* 'the Chinese language'as emblematic of *zhong hua wen hua* 'Chinese culture'. Other practices were not considered linked to Chinese culture, at least not as evidenced from the speakers' discourses. Given that traditional rituals and linguistic practices were deemed to hold very high symbolic "cultural" value to these Chinese speakers, did linguistic practices of Singaporeans also generate similarly positive alignment from the speakers?

Turning now to discourses on linguistic practices, I seek to show that the speakers' overall positioning in relation to Chinese nationals and Singaporeans was different from their close alignment with the two groups of nationals with respect to ritual practices. In fact, a majority of the speakers constructed distance from Singaporeans' use of Mandarin, revealing similarities with their disalignment from Singaporean non-ritual practices.

5.2.3 Ideologies about language use in Singapore

Legitimating Singaporean Mandarin using Mainland ideologies of Mandarin

Distinction holds true in the speakers' ideologies about the linguistic practices of Chinese Singaporeans. Contrary to their comments on ritual practices, the speakers' discourse on language use among the local Chinese hardly ever linked linguistic practices to a past grounded in China. Many participants in the study, particularly speakers from Northern China, constructed ideologies about Singaporean Mandarin use as only remotely associated with China. Most of the speakers from both Northern and Southern regions of China revealed varying degrees of distancing from, i.e. hesitation with identifying with, the Mandarin variety used among Singaporeans.

Only a few of the Southern speakers constructed sameness between Singaporean Mandarin and the Mandarin varieties of China. Gillian, for example, commented that *zhong wen*, which literally references 'China' as the origin of the language, ought to be the appropriate label for Mandarin (called *hua yu*) in Singapore. Gillian's comment was framed in a way that questioned the need for Singaporean Mandarin to be called *hua yu* when the already-existing label *zhong wen* seemed to her to be appropriate. Using *zhong wen* as a label for *hua yu* might have signaled an authentication of Singaporean Mandarin by adequating it with Mainland Chinese varieties. At the same time, however, Gillian's perspective on labeling Singaporean Mandarin clearly stemmed from an ideology that foregrounded China as the authenticating source of the variety while showing a tendency to reduce or erase the regional meanings associated with the use of *hua yu* or any linguistic features distinguishing it from *zhong wen*.

In Example (36), another speaker, Shell, also demonstrated a similarly China-oriented focus in her authentication of Singaporeans use of Mandarin. Framing her assessment of Singaporeans' language proficiencies from the perspective of a Chinese

national, Shell indicated her positioning as an outsider evaluating the local linguistic situation. She constructed Singaporeans' low proficiency in Mandarin as a trade-off with their high English proficiency. Yet, she also aligned herself with Singaporean speakers by remarking that their ability to "converse in," "understand," and "comprehend" Mandarin was "sufficient" and "quite all right." "Sufficient" and "quite all right," though positive descriptive words, certainly reflected limitations to her positive evaluation of Singaporean speakers, given her statement that Singaporeans did not have the same level of sophistication in word choice as the Chinese.

(36) Singaporeans' Mandarin proficiency as "quite all right"
S= Shell, female, early thirties, from Guangdong (SC)

S: hao xiang ying wen hen hao dan shi, hua wen ke neng jiu shi, bu shi hen hao… dui yu yi ge **zhong guo ren** lai shuo wo jue de yi jing shi yi ge, uh, wo jue de yi jing **zu gou** *lah*=jiu shi neng gou, jiao tan. **ke neng ta yong de ze ((zhe)) ge ci, fang mian bing bu shi hen, uh, bing bu shi hen shen, dan shi ne ta neng gou uh, zui qi ma neng gou ming bai.** liao jie. ran hou um, (1) mmm, (2) ji ben shang wo jue –e ((de)) **hai hao** ah.

It's like [they're] good in English, [but as for] Mandarin, [they're] probably not as good… for a **Chinese national**, I feel [their Mandarin proficiency] already, uh, I feel [their Mandarin proficiency] is **sufficient** PART=that is [they] are able to converse**. Perhaps the words they use, in that respect, the words are not difficult words, but they are able to uh, at the very least they can understand.** Comprehend. And then um, mm, basically I think it's **quite alright** PART.

Being able to understand Mandarin and converse in it are characteristics of competency in the language, but those characteristics presumably would not have been enough to characterize Singaporean speakers as highly proficient speakers (as Mainland speakers were). Clearly, Shell harnessed the limited positive aspects of Singaporean speakers' Mandarin proficiency and *adequated* them with the Chinese in spite of differences in their Mandarin proficiencies. I argue that although her alignment with Singaporeans was signaled by the process of adequation, her ability to evaluate and

authenticate Singaporean speakers was rooted in self-accorded linguistic authority enabled by her status as a Mainland speaker of Mandarin. Shell's discourse therefore indicated a layering of two positionings, that is, her alignments with Singaporeans and the Chinese.

The Southern speakers on the whole expressed awareness of phonological differences between their native varieties of Mandarin and 'standard' *Putonghua*, which many reportedly defined as prescribed by *hanyu pinyin* pronunciations of Mandarin words based on *bei fang hua* 'Northern *Putonghua*'. Even though their awareness of dialectal variations across different regions of China enabled many of them to perceive Singaporean Mandarin as a dialect of Mandarin, many constructed their native varieties of Mandarin as more 'standard' than Singaporean Mandarin. For instance, in Example (37) Yan's view on Singaporean Mandarin as "less standard" was shared by a large number of Southern speakers.

(37) Singaporean Mandarin: "not a very standard variety of Putonghua"
Ya= Yan, female, late twenties, from Sichuan (SC)

Ya: u:m m, wo jue de hui suan pu tong hua dan si ((shi)) wo bu jue de hui si ((shi)) hen cun ((chun)) zeng ((zheng)) de pu-hua ((pu tong hua)).

'um, I think that [Singaporean Mandarin] can be considered *Putonghua* but I don't think [Singaporean Mandarin] is a very standard variety of *Putonghua*.'

Many Southern speakers like Yan were more prone than the Northern speakers to recognize Singaporean Mandarin as a regional variety of *Putonghua*. Granted, Yan's native language was a Sichuan dialect of Mandarin, unlike Shell's or Chan's, which were *Guangdong hua* 'Cantonese' and *Fujian hua* 'Hokkien', language varieties that were less closely linked to *Putonghua* than Sichuan Mandarin. As such, Yan's assessment of Singaporean Mandarin might indeed have been informed by her proficiency as a native

speaker of Sichuan Mandarin. However, the construction of Singaporean Mandarin as having fewer features in common with 'standard' *Putonghua* than their native Southern Mainland varieties was not limited to those speakers who spoke Mandarin natively.

Just as it was the case that many Southern speakers constructed a hierarchical order of 'standardness' among varieties of Mandarin, whereby Mainland varieties were constructed as being closer to 'standard' *Putonghua* than Singaporean Mandarin, some of the speakers, including those who spoke Hokkien or Cantonese natively, also distanced themselves from Singaporean speakers by constructing themselves as better able to speak Mandarin than Singaporeans. For example, in (38) Chan linked the inability of some younger Singaporeans to speak Mandarin to a language shift that had happened in Singapore, stating that more and more Singaporeans of the younger generations (including those in his age group) in fact used English rather than Mandarin as their 'mother tongue'. Chan frequently used the third person plural pronouns *they or their* to refer to Singaporeans, separating them from himself. Identifying himself as a poor English speaker who was most comfortable speaking in Mandarin, he distinguished himself from Chinese Singaporeans in his age group by contrasting their language choices from his.

(38) Younger Singaporeans' linguistic practices
C= Chan, male, early thirties, from Fujian(SC)

C: qi si ((shi)) xin yi dai de xin jia po len ((ren)) jiu si ((shi)) xian zai er si ((shi)) lai sui, **ta men de yu yan xi guan xi guan si ((shi)) wan quan bu y-yang.** anh **ta men de mu yu yi jing si ((shi)) ying yu le**… lian ((nian)), lian ((nian)) qing de **ta men** de yu yan xi guan si **wan quan bian. ta men, ye, sen ((shen)) zi ((zhi)) you yi xie hua wen ye bu –ui ((hui)) suo ((shuo)).**

Actually the younger generation of Singaporeans, that is those who are in their twenties now, **their language habits are totally different [than those of the older generation]**. **Their** mother tongue is now English. The youths, **their** language habits have **totally changed**. **To the extent that some of them don't even know how to speak Mandarin.**

Chan's excerpt above indicating a perceived linguistic rift between Chinese Singaporeans and himself was representative of some of the Northern and Southern speakers' views on Singaporeans. While these speakers noticed differences in their language proficiencies and linguistic preferences, other speakers like Yan in Example (39) below conveyed an awareness of the social meanings perceived by their Chinese friends and families should they be heard sounding too much like Singaporean Mandarin speakers. Yan described how her mother, who had never been to Singapore or talked with Singaporean Mandarin speakers, had previously chided her for speaking what sounded to her to be something different from the Mandarin variety that she had grown up speaking. Yan was reminded that she was still a Chinese national and therefore should not speak with a "weird accent and weird tone" lest she became mistaken as a "fake Westerner." According to her, "fake Westerner" was a label used by the Chinese to refer to any Chinese person who did not speak Mandarin well, such as Cantonese-speaking people (in Hong Kong) who historically had connections with and had prospered under the rule of British colonizers. Chinese Singaporeans, like their Cantonese counterparts, thus ran the risk of being deemed Westerners who could not speak Mandarin.

(39) 'Fake Western ghost'
Ya= Yan, female, late twenties, from Sichuan (SC)

Ya: ta –huo ((shuo)) wo gen wo tong xue jiang hua wo peng you jiu hui jiang shuo "ni bu yao ni si ((shi)) **jia yang gui zi."…**wo men suo ((shuo)) suo wei de **'guai qiang guai diao'**…

'[my mother] said [in the hypothetical situation that] I'm speaking with my Chinese classmates, they would say "don't you be like a **fake Western ghost** [=don't try to fake being a Westerner]"…what we mean is this so-called **'weird accent weird tone'…**

With her use of Mandarin having been criticized as potentially inauthentic, Yan reported that she had become conscious of her mother's view of Singaporean Mandarin and would thus reduce the use of Singaporean Mandarin features in her conversations

with her mother. This piece of metalinguistic information revealed Yan's careful monitoring at least in certain contexts of her linguistic behaviors and negotiation of her linguistic identity in relation to her Mainland Chinese mother and Singaporean speakers. The above excerpt thus demonstrated that certain speakers carried with them the ideologies originating in or influenced directly by other people. They themselves exhibited conformity to the ideology that Singaporean Mandarin might have a weird, foreign-sounding accent; thus, not wanting to risk being constructed as inauthentic Mandarin speakers, speakers like Yan constructed distance from Singaporean Mandarin speakers.

The Northern speakers claimed there to be a greater degree of distinction between Singaporean Mandarin and other Mainland Mandarin varieties than the Southern speakers. Singaporean Mandarin and Mainland varieties of Mandarin were viewed as exhibiting greater differences than just being different dialects. Speakers constructed Singaporean Mandarin as subpar with respect to Chinese varieties. In Example (40), stating a hypothetical scenario that not even a foreigner who had learned to speak 'standard' Mandarin in China would give up the use of the Mandarin variety learned in China to use Singaporean Mandarin, Charles implied that Mandarin as used in Singapore was of a lower standard than that used in China. The discourse also assumes that even a non-native speaker of Mandarin would share the same judgments of standardness as a native Mainland speaker. Charles further revealed that the choice of using a particular variety of Mandarin was not simply related to deciding between two dialects that were each recognized as standard (as in the case of Standard American English and Standard British English).

(40) Mandarin learners
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

Ch: jiu hao xiang yi ge, jia she yi ge mei guo ren, ta hui shuo zhong wen. ta zai zhong guo xue le zhong wen. ta ren wei ta xue dao hen biao zhun de zhong wen, ran hou dao xin jia po lai, ta bu hui xiang xin –ia po ren yi yang jiang, jiang zhong wen, wo jue de. ta hui ta hui an zhong guo ren de fang shi jiang.

It's like a, for example, an American who speaks the 'Chinese language'. He learned Chinese in China. He thinks he's learned 'standard Chinese'. Then he comes to Singapore. He would not speak Chinese like a Singaporean, I feel. He would speak the way a Chinese person speaks.

Interestingly, Charles subsequently qualified the above comment by stating that he was merely expressing what other native Mainland speakers thought of Singaporean Mandarin and that he personally had no problems using Singaporean Mandarin features in his speech. He first expressed his personal opinion of Singaporean Mandarin and then distanced himself from his comment moments later in order to construct closer alignment with Singaporeans than was expressed at first. Charles' later comment reflected a 'neutralizing effect' to the negative impression of Singaporeans' use of Mandarin, thus exhibiting similiarities with Grace's and Rubin's discourses about non-ritual practices in which the two speakers appeared to close the distance between themselves and Singaporeans through the construction of 'objectivity'.

Charles in fact reflected variable positionings with respect to Singaporeans' language proficiencies. He noted Singaporeans' weak English competencies by citing an example of his Singaporean wife's frequent inability to interpret for him the meanings of English words that he did not know. He claimed that she, too, did not know the meanings, whereas he always had a ready answer for her when she had a question about words in Mandarin. However, in a yet later part of the interview, Charles even praised Chinese Singaporeans for their ability to be proficient in both English and Mandarin. As shown in Example (41), he remarked that their competency in English was the best in Asia. As for

their competency in Mandarin, he stated that Singaporeans were the most proficient in the world; however, the statement included a qualifying clause which again distinguished Singaporean Mandarin from Mainland Mandarin.

(41) Praising Singaporeans' use of English and Mandarin, while maintaining that Mainland Mandarin is superior
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

Ch: wo jue de xin –ia po ren, (1.5) ying wen zai ya zhou shi zui hao de. ran hou, zhong wen zai **chu zhong guo yi wai** de shi zui hao de.

'I feel that Singaporeans, [their competence in] English is the best in Asia. And then, [their competence in] *zhong wen*[=Chinese language], **with the exception of China**, is the best.'

Though Charles' comment in (41) signaled a generally favorable attitude towards Singaporean speakers, it nonetheless reflected an ideology distinguishing Singaporean Mandarin speakers from Mainland speakers like himself. Charles thus projected Mainland speakers as having higher Mandarin proficiencies than Singaporean speakers. Furthermore, Charles' reference to Mainland China indicated that his perspectives on the language use of the local Chinese in Singapore were strongly rooted in his alignment with China and Mainland Chinese speakers. On the other hand, his evaluations of Singaporeans' English proficiencies were both positive and not-so-positive. I propose that his stances with regard to Singaporeans' use of English reflected more variability than his attitudes towards their Mandarin use, because his ties to English were relatively recent; in other words, there was no historical link between his use of English and his language practices in China with which to claim authority over the use of English among Singaporeans.

Like Charles, Rubin, Jane, and William in Examples (42)-(43) also indicated alignment with Mainland linguistic practices. However, they indicated contradictory

attitudes as compared to Charles', exhibiting stronger disalignment from Singaporean practices with respect to Chinese Singaporeans' bilingual abilities. Stating that Singaporeans' English proficiencies were inferior to those of American or British English speakers and that their Mandarin proficiencies were inferior to those of Mainland speakers, Rubin strongly criticized Singaporeans' proficiencies in either language. In Example (43) below the portions in bold in Jane's statement echoed Rubin's opinion about Chinese Singaporeans weak grasp of English and Mandarin.

(42) "Not good at anything"
R= Rubin, male, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)

R: xin -a po ren she me dou xue, dan -hi ((shi)) sh: **she me dou ge ((gao?)) bu hao** ((chuckles)). ya-h- ((yao shuo)) ying yu ma, **xue -e ((de)) ye bu shi, gen na xie, ge- ((gen)) mei guo bi gen ying guo bi hai shi bu hao. hua wen ne *gen zhong guo* bi hai shi bu hao.** ((chuckles)).

Singaporeans pick up everything, but they're not good at anything. Take English for example, what they've learned isn't as good as compared to [English in] America, [in] Britain. As for Mandarin, [their proficiency is] also not as good as compared to *China*.

(43) Singaporean language use "superficial"
J= Jane, female, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)

J: um. (1.4) general speakin- this [d] uh Singapo:ren ((used *Singaporen*= 'person' instead of '-rean')) I mean this (([dɪs])) the language phenomena is quite unique. yeah. b- cause they speak, differen- language=English Chinese Malay or Tamil or wha-ever. so i-s a: combination of all? so i-s very unique, itself? and but, when comes to language itself like ((clears throat)) **uh really, the usage of the language. and is, ver- superficial. cause, they,** (([dei])) **when** (([ven])) **they master y-know, differen- languages I think** (([sɪŋ])) **they (([dei])) don- really go for that** (([dæt])), **the** (([də])) **depth** (([deps])). so is very (([weɾi]))=it's good enough for daily, daily usage conversations? and, **but they are NOT, good at certain y- know, one** (([wen])) **specific language.** m- if some people maybe *lah* but this (([dɪs])) is jus- a general? yeah. general phenomena. so i-s quite superficial *lah* the words (they) use.

Jane's statement that Singaporean speakers lacked "depth" suggested not only distance from Singaporeans, but also her construction of an authoritative role over Chinese Singaporeans' language abilities. Interestingly, the linguistic distancing from Singaporeans also applied to English, her non-native language. Like Jane, Rubin also put down the locals' use of English even though he was not a native English speaker. While it was the case that the two speakers conveyed similar disalignment from Singaporean English, I argue that the degrees of disalignment might actually be different. It is noteworthy that both of these speakers reported to have picked up or been able to actually practice using English only after they arrived in Singapore. Although Rubin expressed reservations about the level of proficiency in English that he had reached and questioned whether the Singaporean linguistic context impeded his learning of English, Jane reported elsewhere in the interview to have had a positive learning experience and was appreciative of her opportunity to have learned English in Singapore. Jane actually *did not mind* being immersed in the Singaporean English context and thus even constructed the language phenomenon in Singapore as somewhat positively as "unique."

William took issue with Singaporeans' use of English words in Mandarin utterances. The particular example of Singaporeans' use of 'then' which he cited in Example (44) was raised as a local linguistic "habit" that he could not tolerate. Besides noting this particular practice, he also performed how the locals would use 'then'. He injected emphasis on the frequency with which he must have perceived the word being used in everyday Mandarin conversations among Singaporeans by his own repetition of the word several times in the short span of the performance. William's performance thus signaled strong disagreement with the locals' use of English in Mandarin utterances, further revealing his ideology about Mandarin use in Singapore as rooted in his monolingual Mandarin practices in China.

(44) "zen zen zen…"
W= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC)

W: qi-i ((shi)) zai zhe di fang wo jin liang jiang keep, keep wo de nei ge:, ze me jiang ne. jin liang bu yao shou tai duo de ying xiang…shuoR shuo re ((shuo zhe)) ((reporting what a Singaporean speaker might say)) "zen[21] ((*'then'*))." "jin tian -e ((zhe)) ge shi qing zen, zen zen zen zen." jiu ru- ((shuo)) you sh-ou ((shi hou)) wo jie shou bu liao de *lah*.

'actually in this place [i.e.Singapore] I try to keep, keep my:, how do I put it. [I] try to be influenced as little as possible [by the local linguistic habits]…while speaking, ((performing Singaporeans' inclusion of the word 'then' in their use of Mandarin)) "zen ((pronouncing 'then' as [zen]))." "Today this thing zen, zen zen zen zen." That is, at times I can't accept it PART.'

Other Northern speakers also revealed ideologies based on Mainland Chinese standards and therefore signaled stronger alignments with Mainland linguistic practices than with Singaporean ones. For instance, Sihui used the idiom *ru xiang sui su* 'lit: enter village, follow customs', meaning 'to assimilate local practices', indicating that she had come to accept Singaporeans' different use of Mandarin. However, *ru xiang sui su* was constructed with a qualifier, *zhi neng* 'can only', as in 'I have no choice but to assimilate to Singaporeans' linguistic behaviors *first*, if not, I would have to face a lot of linguistic obstacles at work'. Hence, a tone of reluctance was revealed in Sihui's use of *ru xiang sui su*; her assimilation of Singaporean Mandarin was thus constructed as half-hearted and a temporary solution (as implied by '*first*') to the linguistic dissonance she faced in terms of the differences between Mainland and Singaporean linguistic practices. Sihui's yearning for a "fix" to her temporary assimilation strategy demonstrated that her linguistic ties to Singapore were temporary and weak, while her linguistic ties to China

[21] William did not regularly produce the voiced interdental fricative [ð] in '**th**en'. Instead, he more often realized the voiced interdental 'th' sound using the voiced alveolar fricative [z]. He used the voiced alveolar stop [d] for the same sound only occasionally.

were constructed as strong. Her long term solution to "overcoming" the linguistic differences was to return to China, where her familial ties remained very strong, as evidenced through phrases such as "love my homeland" and "my mother my daughter my husband, *zhe xie dou, dou shi wo de gen"* 'my mother, daughter, and husband, they are my roots [in China]'. Sihui's articulation of her longing for her family, which was in China, was reflective of the strong sense of attachment to China among the three other older speakers in the study who were all in their mid- thirties to mid-forties when they moved to Singapore, viz. Ying, Dan, and Li Chen.

To sum up, in this section, at least for some of the speakers, their familial ties to China appeared to be relevant to their judgments of linguistic practices in Singapore and how they positioned themselves in relation to Chinese Singaporean speakers. Other speakers revealed an ideology that 'standard' Mandarin was rooted in Mainland-based varieties, thus constructing their role as arbiters of the Chinese language. The highlighted parts in bold in Examples (45)-(47) below provide further illustration of how the linguistic authority constructed by some of the speakers played into their negative portrayal of Singaporean Mandarin. William, Wei, and Ying each criticized different aspects of Singaporean Mandarin, essentially constructing China's *Putonghua* as their frame of reference and conveying their strong biases towards the 'standardness' of the Mainland's varieties.

(45) "Essence of China"
WL= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC)

WL: xin –a po qiang diao shuang yu. ran hou ne ta you bu ti chang (1) xie han zi. zhong wen ah. xie zi. **zhong guo na ge jing hua** –iu [jiu] zai na ge zi de li mian=**ru–o ni zhi hui shuo, ni gen ben mei you zhang wo dao zhe ge jing hua de.** wo bu ming bai (1.7) ta men ze me xiang de.

'Singapore emphasizes bilingualism. But then it doesn't promote the writing of Chinese words. Chinese language. Writing. **The essence of China** is right there in the words=**if**

you only know how to speak [but don't know how to write], you absolutely do not have a grasp of the essence [of Chineseness]. I don't understand what they're thinking.'

(46) Singaporean Mandarin "does not sound good"
W= Wei, male, late twenties, from Inner Mongolia (NC)

W: (2) wo hui pa wo: shuo xi guan xin –a po hua de pu tong hua. ((breathes in)) (1.6) hui dao zhong guo, bie ren ren wei wo bu hui shuo hua ((breaks into chuckle)) liao…**bu tai biao zhun… shuo shi zai hua, qi shi ta bu hao ting.** ni yao zheng chang, (1.7) yong suo wei (([vei])) de suo wei guan fang pu tong hua Mandarin, lai jiang, ting shang qu, **bu hao ting.**

'I'm afraid I will become habituated to speaking Singaporean-style Mandarin. When I return to China, other people may think that I don't know how to speak Mandarin… [Singaporean Mandarin is] **not 'standard'… honestly it does not sound good.** If you [compare it to] normal, official *Putonghua* Mandarin, it **does not sound good**.'

(47) A need to raise the standard of Singaporean Mandarin
Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)

Y: wo cong hua yu de jiao du lai jiang *hanh* wo zhen de shi jue de **you: ti gao de bi yao.**

'as for my perspective of *huayu* [=Singaporean Mandarin] PART I really think **there's a need to raise [its standard]**.'

The three speakers above constructed Singaporean Mandarin as deficient in some fundamental aspect of its use. In particular, William's criticism of language planning policies in Singapore identified the "essence" of Chinese "culture" was grounded in written rather than spoken language. Given that written Chinese was instituted as the linguistic link which unified the different regional, sometimes mutually unintelligible, languages in China (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed description), William's statement thus reflected an ideology emphasizing the provenance of the unified language of Mainland Chinese. Speakers with knowledge of spoken Mandarin without proficiency in its written form were therefore constructed as failing to grasp the crux of the historicity of the unified language of China. Although William recognized that Singaporeans' lack of written Chinese proficiency was influenced by state-level language policies, he

nonetheless de-legitimated Singaporean Mandarin speakers and constructed them as culturally separated from Mainland Chinese.

5.2.4 Cultural authority and legitimation of Singaporeans

So far in this chapter, I have investigated speakers' comparisons of various practices in China and Singapore and found that non-ritual and linguistic practices of Singaporeans were evaluated negatively while ritual practices were lauded as remarkably well-preserved. That ritual practices of Singaporeans were viewed as impressive whereas the other practices were not was suggestive of ideological 'highlighting' on the part of the speakers. Just as 'erasure' has been identified as a semiotic process in the ideological construction of differences (Gal, 1998; Gal & Irvine, 1995; Irvine & Gal, 2000), whereby ideologies "forc[e] attention on only one part or dimension…thereby rendering some linguistic forms or groups inivisible" (Gal, 1998: 328), 'highlighting', a process opposite from but resulting in similar effects as erasure, ultimately renders prominence to certain forms, groups, practices, or characteristics while reducing others to lower degrees of prominence (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004b).

The Mainland speakers in this study 'highlighted' Singaporean rituals from among the different cultural practices in order to re-construct Chinese rituals which were no longer practiced in the Mainland. Linking the positive valorization of rituals in China's past to Singapore's present, the Mainland speakers thus valued Singaporeans positively. However, in the process of highlighting and legitimating Singaporeans' practice of Chinese traditions, it was as if Singaporean non-ritual and linguistic practices were not factored into the speakers' alignment with Singaporeans. Non-ritual and linguistic practices were, in a way, erased by the speakers in their projection of cultural ties with Singaporeans. I suggest that the fact that Mainland speakers identified with

specific Singaporean cultural practices is related more with how those specific practices could help them construct a Mainland Chinese cultural identity than with constructing a Chinese Singaporean cultural identity.

In this concluding section, I discuss the speakers' claimed authority as Chinese cultural arbiters or gatekeepers, as pointed out in the preceding sections, and its relevance to explaining the speakers' variable stances with respect to the different practices. Many of the speakers' noting of exceptional qualities in Singaporean ritual practices revealed how present Singaporean practices and past Mainland Chinese practices were presumed to be similar. Even though there was a high likelihood that the practices differed in some form or other between the past and the present in China and in Singapore, the speakers placed emphasis on Chinese Singaporean ritual practices as if they were identical to those of the Mainland and in which they themselves used to partake, if at all. The fact that these speakers linked their ties to China's cultural past via present Singaporean ritual practices might have been suggestive of the speakers' eagerness to construct sameness with Singaporeans. However, I argue that the sameness, as it were, was primarily a means to their reconstruction of a part of their Mainland Chinese cultural identity, that is, their reconnection with Chinese rituals which had reportedly been obscured by the eradication of those practices during the Cultural Revolution. The speakers' ideologies about present practices in China and Singapore were hence first and foremost grounded in China's history and historicity. Perhaps this can be traced to their native statuses in China by which some constructed their access to knowledge of Chinese history and civilization as more direct than that of Chinese Singaporeans, hence, enabling them to portray themselves as purveyors of Chineseness, some more subtly than others.

Wanning Sun noted in her book, *Leaving China* (W. Sun, 2002), that shared memories of significant events in the homeland, when "continuously refreshed and

articulated" (p.117), are especially helpful for the construction of solidarity and identity among immigrants from China. Sun's depiction of the vitality of memories as a source of imagining the homeland is not unlike Benedict Anderson's (1983) sketch of the print media as a viable means of imagining distant communities. Though a majority of the speakers in this study knew about China's past ritual practices, the absence or vagueness of memories of Mainland Chinese ritual traditions as well as the obliteration of print records as a result of the Cultural Revolution did not and could not help their imagination of this cultural aspect of their experiences as Mainland Chinese. What did help the speakers relate to China's past traditions was their ability to "refresh and articulate" their cultural past through glimpses into experiences with the ritual practices in Singapore. By projecting local Singaporean ritual practices translocally onto China, specifically, China's past, formerly practiced Mainland rituals were actually able to come into focus, [22] that is, become more salient to them than they had ever been prior to their stay in Singapore. By being the means of connecting the speakers with their lost traditions, the Singaporean ritual practices might thus be cherished by the speakers in light of the practices' rarity in present day China and were considered meaningful to the speakers' reconstruction of their Mainland Chinese identity while in Singapore.

It can be seen from the speakers' detached stances from Singaporeans' non-ritual and linguistic practices that they did not seek to construct sameness with Singaporeans at various possible levels, but instead built solidarity with Singaporeans on just one specific level: exhibiting positive attitudes about Singaporean ritual practices. Therefore, culture was reduced to shared rituals; differing linguistic practices were perhaps associated with cultural discontinuity. Those who indicated solidarity on this front thus stood to gain

[22] I use 'focus' here in a similar vein to Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) use of 'focusing' and 'diffusion' as tropes on which to talk about the saliency of sociocultural properties. (1985)

from identifying with the local ritual practices in that imaginations of a missing cultural piece of their homeland could be invoked. On the other hand, the use of Mandarin and engagement in other everyday practices had always been a part of the speakers' lived experiences. As cultural practices, Singaporean non-ritual and linguistic practices are theoretically no less significant than ritual practices. However, possibly because they are commonplace, everyday practices, not lost or rarely occurring like ritual practices, they were less valuable to the speakers' construction of their Mainland Chinese identities. Further, speakers may also generally not consider linguistic and non-ritual practices to be part of culture.

In this chapter I also presented examples demonstrating that the speakers were not always uniformly or clearly positioned in relation to Mainland Chinese and Singaporeans. Their experiences living in Singapore had perhaps shaped new transnational subjectivities whereby speakers' encounters with local Singaporeans and practices had modified how they identified with social practices of Mainland Chinese. It is perhaps these new subjectivities that guided speakers such as Grace in Example (34) to construct an "objective" positioning in her characterization of Mainland Chinese and Singaporeans. However, Grace did not always project neutrality; at times, she revealed her opinions about Singaporean practices as having been guided by ideologies shared with fellow Mainland Chinese speakers. I argue that for the most part, many of the speakers engaged in the arbitration of Singaporean Chinese culture using their knowledge ties to the history and historicity of China and Chinese practices as a resource.

Last but not least, the roles of Chinese culture arbiters were evident in some of the speakers' construction of Chinese Singaporeans as gradually losing their grasp of Chinese culture. Speaking from a position of having witnessed a decline in recent generations in the participation of traditional practices, these speakers constructed

themselves as able to foresee an impending cultural decline among Singaporeans, perhaps because of the Cultural Revolution and the ensuing social change in China. They viewed Singaporeans as engaging in only certain types of activities which were deemed emblematic of Chinese "culture," while other crucial aspects of Chinese culture such as attaining proficiency in spoken 'standard' Mandarin and competency in written Chinese were constructed as having fallen by the wayside. While many of the speakers were impressed by Singaporeans for their practice of traditional rituals, their praises were primarily targeted at the older generation. The speakers therefore cast doubt on their own ability to identify with younger Singaporeans who were closer in age to them. In doing so, they portrayed themselves as able to legitimate Chinese Singaporeans and their practices.

In conclusion, more significant than the physical space in which the Mainland Chinese speakers located themselves was an ideological space in which the Mainland and its nationals were situated at the center and Singapore and Singaporeans on the periphery. By centering China within this ideological space, the speakers constructed symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1977) in regards to practices in Singapore and social characteristics of Singaporeans. To my knowledge, there has not been any discussion in the literature of how Chinese immigrants positioned themselves with respect to other groups of Chinese. I hope to have shown in this chapter that speakers' discourses provide a wealth of information about their ideologies about language and other kinds of practices as well as how those ideologies help to shape the Chinese speakers' positionings with respect to Chinese Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese.

Having examined the Mainland speakers' ideologies about the language varieties and Singaporeans' language use, in the following chapters, I examine their actual language use. In Chapter 6 I shall investigate the extent to which the speakers drew on

phonological features specific only to Mainland China and not to Singapore. In Chapter 7 I shall explore the speakers' extents of use of Singaporean language resources and practices.

Chapter 6: Variation in the use of Chinese Mandarin phonological features among Northern Mandarin speakers

6.1 MANDARIN PHONOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN SINGAPORE

A frequently made comment by the Chinese speakers I studied in regards to the phonology of Singaporean Mandarin is that its features resemble those of Southern Chinese Mandarin (Southern Mandarin) varieties more closely than those of Northern varieties. Such an observation is indeed reflective of the fact that most speakers of Singaporean Mandarin have linguistic ties to Southern Chinese language varieties such as Cantonese, Hainanese, Hokkien, and Teochew. Although these dialects fundamentally share a prescribed written script with Mandarin,[23] their syntax, phonological inventories, and tonal repertoires have distinct qualities from Beijing Mandarin (Wei, 1993), the variety on which *Putonghua* or 'Standard Mandarin' is modeled. Thus, given that the Southern dialects were dominant among Singaporean speakers until the late 1970s, tonal nuances as well as articulatory influences from the dialects, such as absence of alveopalatal or retroflex consonants and absence of rhotacization of word-final syllables, continue to be exhibited in the Mandarin repertoire of many Chinese Singaporeans who grew up speaking the dialects natively instead of Mandarin, particularly older speakers in their fifties or older (Chen, 1999).

Hence, even though Singaporean Mandarin, being modeled after *Standard Putonghua*, has many features in common with Mandarin used in China, its phonological inventory consists of Southern-like features that are familiar to native speakers of Southern Mandarin but not so much to Northern Mandarin native speakers. In this

[23] Ping Chen's (1999) account of the history of Modern Chinese puts the first ever implementation of a standard written Chinese script at 221 BC, during the reign of Emperor Qin Shihuang. The main motive for standardization was, of course, to enforce unification among the previously warring states that Emperor Qin had successfully brought together for the first time in Chinese history.

chapter, I seek to address the questions: At what frequency do the Northern Mandarin speakers make use of resources associated uniquely with Mandarin used in China but not in the Mandarin of Singapore? What meanings are associated with patterns observed among the Northern speakers' use of Northern Mandarin features across different speech contexts?

In my analysis, I examine the frequency at which two separate Northern Mandarin phonological features, word-final rhotacization and neutral tone, are used by the Chinese speakers. Singaporean Mandarin (SingM), as well as Southern Mandarin (SM) contrast with Northern Mandarin (NM) with respect to the phonological features which I briefly describe in A and B below, but which I will discuss further in the next section.

A. The rhotacization of word-final syllables in Northern Mandarin versus non-rhotacized finals in Singaporean/Southern Mandarin.

   Roughly analogous to r-fullness in most dialects of American English and r-lessness in most dialects of British English, Northern Mandarin speakers insert a subsyllabic –r [ɹ] in word-final syllables. E.g., 'here' zhè [tʂɤ] (SingM/SM) is pronounced as zhèr [tʂɤɹ] (NM) (Zhang, 2001).

B. The use of neutral tone in Northern Mandarin versus full tone in Singaporean Mandarin/Southern Mandarin. Weakly stressed syllables in Northern Mandarin varieties have a neutral tone, which does not bear a fixed pitch value. In contrast, Southern Mandarin varieties as well as Singaporean Mandarin and Taiwanese Mandarin make no distinction between weak and regular stress on syllables; thus, every syllable has a full tone (i.e. one of the four pitch-bearing tones) (Chen, 1999; C. N. Li & Thompson, 1981). E.g., 'understand' míng.bǎi [miŋpai] (SingM or SM) is pronounced as míng.bai (NM) (Zhang, 2001). A full tone is transcribed phonetically by a tonal diacritic over each syllable, as exhibited in the

Singaporean Mandarin and Southern Mandarin transcription. The diacritic over the second syllable in the Singaporean Mandarin pronunciation, bǎi, signifies the third tone; it is not found over the same syllable in representations of Northern Mandarin pronunciation. Therefore, the absence of a tonal diacritic on the Northern Mandarin pronunciation, *bai*, signifies a neutral tone.

As the above features are extremely salient for non-Northern Mandarin listeners, in Singapore, the occurrence of word-final rhotacization or neutral tones in the speech of Northern Mandarin speakers marks them as foreigners to locals. On the other hand, Southern Mandarin speakers are less likely to draw attention to the phonological differences between the locals' phonological repertoires and theirs by virtue of the fact that they generally employ those features associated with Northern Mandarin varieties to a much smaller frequency, if at all.

This configuration of linguistic differences with respect to practices, linked as they are with regional and national identities, provide an ideal context for examining the frequency at which the Northern Mandarin speakers in this study displayed variable use of the distinct regional features. In the next section, I examine the social meanings associated with the use of word-final rhotacization among Northern Mandarin speakers.

6.2 RHOTACIZATION OF FINALS

Word-final rhotacization in Mandarin is historically linked with the suffixation of a diminutive marker, 儿 '-er', to noun stems in Northern Chinese varieties of Mandarin. The semantic function of '-er' as a diminutive marker gradually became less emphasized; instead, the phonological aspect of '-er' as a retroflex suffix (C. N. Li & Thompson, 1981) gained prominence (Chao, 1968; Chen, 1999; C. N. Li & Thompson, 1981; Y. Lu, 1995). Consequently, rhotacization or 'r-coloring' (Shi, 2004) of other non-diminutive stems, including nouns, demonstratives, and classifiers, also became prevalent alongside the diminutive suffix, occurring the most in Beijing Mandarin, such that word-final pronunciations were modified in certain word-final, vocalic and nasal environments as shown in the table below.

Table 6.1 Mandarin word finals with their corresponding rhotacized endings (in *hanyu pinyin*) (Contemporary Chinese Dictionary, p. 24 (Yuan et al., 2002))

Word-final syllables ending in basic vowel sounds	**Word-final syllables ending in diphthongs and triphthongs**	**Word-final syllables ending in nasal sounds**	**Corresponding rhotacized endings**
A	ai	an	***ar***
E			***er***
O			***or***
I	ei	en	***ər***
	ia	ian	***iar***
	ie		***ier***
	i	in	***iər***
	ua, uai	uan	***uar***
	uo		***uor***
	uei	uen	***uər***
U			***ur***
		üan	***üar***
	üe		***üer***
Ü		ün	***üər***
	ao		***aor***
	ou		***our***
		ang	***ãr***
		eng	***ər̃***
		ong	***õr***
	iao		***iaor***
	iou		***iour***
		iang	***iãr***
		ing	***iər̃***
		iong	***iõr***
		uang	***uãr***
		ueng	***uər̃***

Speakers of Northern Mandarin tend to rhotacize words of different grammatical categories that end in the final sounds displayed in the three leftmost columns in Table 6.1. For example, the word *xiao xiong* [ɕiǎo.ɕĭoŋ] 'little bear' is realized as [ɕiǎo.ɕĭo**ɻ**]. Certain analyses of the occurrence of rhotacized finals have taken a morpho-phonologically approach by analyzing them as originally rooted in the suffixation of the diminutive marker '-er' (Chao, 1968; C. N. Li & Thompson, 1981). Instead of the marker's attaching itself as an additional syllable, only the retroflex sound [ɻ] is phonologically realized in syllable-final position of the second syllable. Moreover, the addition of [ɻ] replaces the final segment of the original word-final syllable, the velar nasal [ŋ], as indicated in bold in the phonetic transcription. Even though [ŋ] itself is not pronounced, the nasal quality of the velar nasal is retained on the vowel. Hence, the resultant syllable, as indicated in the rightmost column of the above table, often involves syllable-final phonological modifications.

By contrast, speakers of Singaporean Mandarin tend not to rhotacize nominal stems, much less stems of other grammatical categories. My own linguistic habits as a native Singaporean Mandarin speaker and observations of other Singaporean speakers' use of Mandarin point to a general pattern in '-er' suffixation in Singaporean Mandarin, namely, that '-er' is not realized as [ɻ] being phonetically associated with the rime of the original syllable; instead, it tends to be realized as a separate syllable [əɻ]. Thus, the number of syllables in the word is increased through the suffixation of '-er'. As '-er' is realized as a separate syllable, the preceding syllable to which it is suffixed does not undergo any change in the phonological features. Additionally, Singaporean Mandarin speakers almost never use the retroflex sound [ɻ] even when the '-er' ending is incorporated into noun stems or locative demonstratives.

Through elicitation of words with '-er' suffixation from a female, native Singaporean Mandarin speaker who is a retired high school Chinese language teacher, I noted some illustrative examples, as shown below. I found that there is convergence between my personal observations of '-er' suffixation and the general phonological features of the elicited tokens.

(48) Examples of the use of '-er' in Singaporean Mandarin

Following nouns: hua-er [huā.ʔə́] 花儿 'flower-DIM'; gou-er [gǒu.ʔə́] 狗儿 'dog-DIM'; niao-er [niǎo.ʔə́] 鸟儿 'bird-DIM'; yi hui-er [ʔī huǐ.ʔə́] 一会儿 'a short moment'; dai hui-er [dāi huǐ.ʔə́] 待会儿 'in a short while'

Following locative demonstratives: zhe-er [tʂ.ʔə́] 这儿 'here'; na-er [nà.ʔə́] 那儿 'there'; na-er [nǎ.ʔə́(ɹ)] 哪儿 'where'

Reflecting a typical characteristic of Singaporean Mandarin phonology, this Singaporean speaker's use of '-er' in words such as 'flower-DIM' [huā.ʔə́] does not incorporate the retroflex [ɹ]. Furthermore, the diminutive marker, pronounced as [ʔə], is separately syllabified from the first syllable, which is the nominal stem; the initial [ʔ] further marks the separate syllable. Hence, given the phonological distinctions between Northern Mandarin and Singaporean Mandarin (or Southern Mandarin varieties), do the Northern Mandarin speakers involved in this study display Northern Mandarin rhotacization patterns; do they use a syllabic [ə] suffix instead; or do they utilize both a syllabic '-er' along with rhotacization, i.e. [əɹ]? Before presenting the findings from the data analysis, I outline below the sampling of data and calculation of speakers' degrees of rhotacization.

6.2.2 Sampling of data

Samples of each speaker's speech were obtained from individual and group interviews, as well as from speakers' self-recorded conversations in everyday interactions with other Chinese speakers or when talking on the phone with Chinese family and friends. Each sample was made up of approximately twenty instances of noun phrases, classifiers, and demonstratives with the final environments listed in Table 6.1 above. As shown in Table 6.2 below, a total of between 40 and 100 tokens was sampled from each speaker (indicated in Column C). The actual number of tokens included for statistical analysis is reflected in Column D. The distinction in the number of sampled versus analyzed tokens results from the fact that tokens from speech contexts involving Singaporean interlocutors (with the exception of myself) were excluded because such conversations were recorded by only a small number of speakers. The limited number of recorded interactions with Singaporean interlocutors thus would not have been representative of general rhotacization behaviors with Singaporean interlocutors among all the participants in this study. Even though the conversations with Singaporean interlocutors were excluded in the statistical analysis, speakers' rhotacization usage in conversations with coworkers, students, and taxi drivers will be discussed qualitatively in the Results section (Section 6.2.3) below.

The contexts that were included for statistical analysis were chosen because of the availability of speech samples from a majority of speakers. These contexts and their corresponding number of analyzed tokens are shown in Column E of Table 6.2. On average, 60 tokens were analyzed from the speech samples obtained from each speaker.

Table 6.2: Breakdown of the number of tokens sampled from each speaker

A	B	C	D	E		
Speaker Name	Sex	Total No. of Tokens **Sampled**	Total No. of Tokens **Analyzed**	Breakdown of statistically analyzed tokens in terms of speech context		
				(a) Interview	(b) Group Interview	(c) With other Chinese speakers
Anna	F	80	60	20	20	20
Chan	M	60	60	20	20	20
Charles	M	87	67	20	26	21
Dabaicai	M	40	40	20	20	NA
Dan	M	60	60	20	20	20
Gillian	F	60	40	20	20	NA
Grace	F	61	61	20	20	21
Jane	F	67	47	7	20	20
Julia	F	80	60	20	20	20
Laura	F	60	60	20	5	15 + 20 *
Li Chen	F	60	60	20	20	20
Lyn	F	60	60	20	20	20
Rubin	M	51	51	21	20	10
Shell	F	60	40	20	20	NA
Sihui	F	60	60	20	20	20
Wei	M	94	74	21	20	13 + 20 *
William[24]	M	64	44	24	NA	20
Xiaobo	M	80	80	20	20	20 + 20
Yan	F	100	60	20	20	20
Yilin	F	100	80	20	20	20 + 20
Ying	F	77	77	21	20	22 + 14 *

* More than one speech context was sampled, such that the different sets of numbers indicate the number of tokens obtained for each separate speech context.

The statistical analysis involved calculating the frequency of rhotacization as a percentage of the number of rhotacized finals observed out of the total number of sampled tokens in which word-final rhotacization is possible. The tokens of those speakers who rhotacized word-finally were also coded and analyzed using Goldvarb X

[24] Group interview data were not obtained for William as he was not present at the interview.

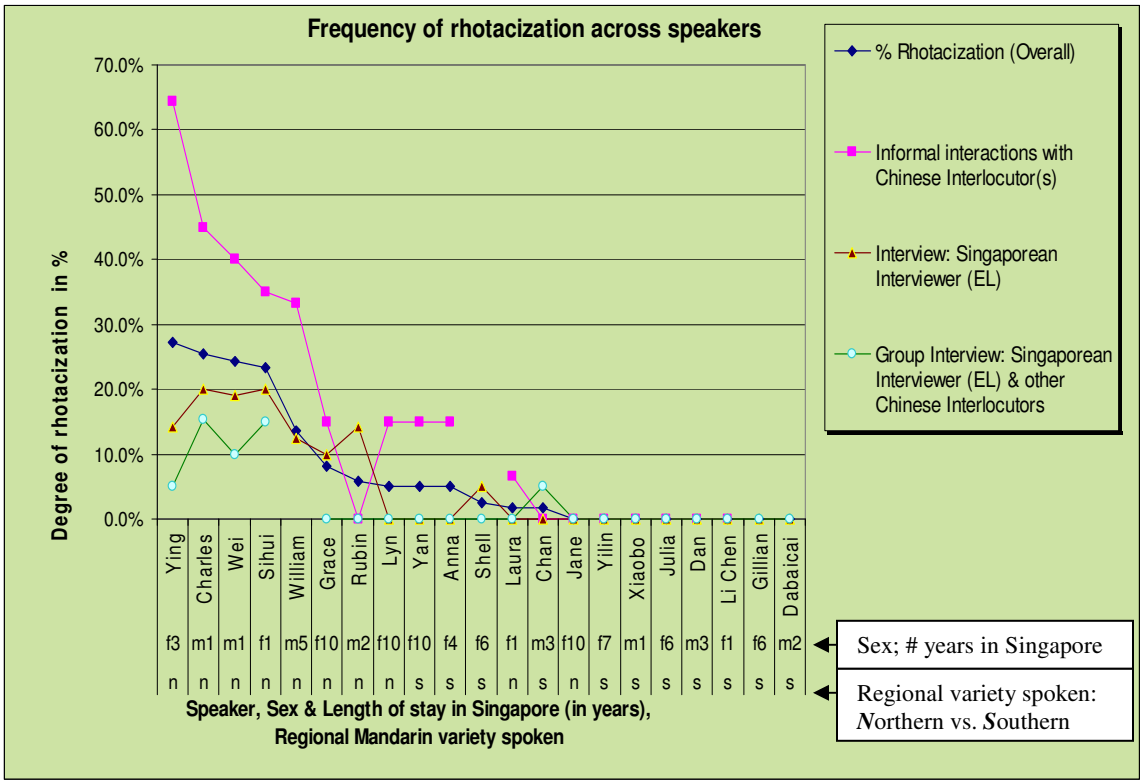
(Sankoff et al., 2005), a statistical tool which performs multivariate analysis of linguistic variables vis-à-vis factors that may not be readily quantifiable.

6.2.3 Results: General findings

In all of the tokens of rhotacization exhibited by the 13 speakers, [ɹ] is incorporated into the final syllable of the word; thus, none of the tokens displayed the full syllabification of '-er' that is commonly employed among Singaporean speakers. The frequency of rhotacization among all of the speakers is represented in Chart 6.1, wherein each speaker's overall frequency of rhotacization is indicated by the second line from the top (i.e. the curved line with the least degree of jaggedness out of the four lines on the graph). In addition to the overall degree of rhotacization, which indicates each speaker's use of rhotacization across all speech contexts sampled for that speaker, the graph also displays the degrees of rhotacization in separate speech contexts. These breakdowns according to the type of interaction and interlocutors' regional backgrounds are represented by the other three lines on the graph.[25] Speakers with the highest-to-lowest overall degrees of rhotacization have been ranked from left-to-right on the chart.

[25] Since there were no recordings of a few of the speakers' language use in certain contexts, certain lines on the chart appear disjointed because of the lack of corresponding percentage scores for those speakers and contexts. Also, no group interview data were obtained from William.

Chart 6.1: Speakers' degrees of rhotacization across three different speech contexts



As can be seen from Chart 6.1, 13 of the 21 speakers exhibited rhotacization in their speech. A majority of the 13 speakers—9 in all—were native Northern Mandarin speakers. Since word-final rhotacization is primarily a phonological feature of Northern Mandarin, the fact that rhotacization was exhibited mainly among the Northern Mandarin speakers was not surprising. However, even though rhotacization was used by all but one Northern speaker, the overall rate of rhotacization was not as high as would be expected of such a widely used phonological feature in Northern China. The input value, reflecting the probability for the application of a linguistic rule or feature (in this case, word-final rhotacization), was only 0.065. In other words, the data from the 13 speakers who did use rhotacization indicates that an average of only 6.5 tokens were rhotacized out of every 100 tokens in which rhotacization could possibly have occurred.

In addition, the Goldvarb factor weights obtained revealed that an even smaller group within the 13 speakers actually favored the use of rhotacization in daily speech. In Table 6.3, each speaker's factor weight score is grouped according to his or her regional language background. Given that factor weight scores between 0 and 0.5 reflect a disfavoring of the use of rhotacization, that is, fewer than 6.5 instances are rhotacized for every 100 tokens, while scores between 0.5 and 1 indicate that speakers favored rhotacization, only five speakers had scores that were greater than 0.5. Thus, with the exception of the five speakers, the overall tendency for the speakers in the study to rhotacize was not high at all.

Table 6.3: Individual speakers' degrees of rhotacization in terms of factor weight scores (FW)

Factor group analyzed in this analysis: Individual speakers

Northern Mandarin Speakers

Speaker	***Ying***	***Charles***	***Wei***	***Sihui***	***William***	**Grace**	**Rubin**	**Lyn**	**Laura**	**Jane**
% [ɹ]	***27.3***	***25.4***	***24.3***	***23.3***	***13.6***	8.2	5.9	5.0	1.7	0
FW	***0.801***	***0.785***	***0.776***	***0.766***	***0.629***	0.490	0.402	0.362	0.154	0

Southern Mandarin Speakers

Speaker	Yan	Anna	Shell	Chan	Yilin	Xiaobo	Julia	Dan	Li Chen	Gillian	Dbc
% [ɹ]	5.0	5.0	2.5	1.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FW	0.362	0.362	0.216	0.154	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Although the Northern Mandarin speakers generally exhibited higher degrees of rhotacization than their Southern compatriots, two of the Northern speakers, Lyn and Laura, rhotacized only to a comparable degree as did the Southern speakers, viz. Yan, Anna, Shell, and Chan. Jane, a Northern Mandarin speaker, whose scores are also shaded, did not rhotacize at all—not even while on the phone with her mother in China.

Referring back to Chart 6.1, we can see that only the Northern speakers displayed contextual variation in rhotacization that was informed by a certain degree of audience-

directedness. Thus, the range of contexts in which rhotacization occurred among the Northern speakers was broader than that of the Southern speakers. Again, Lyn, Laura, and Jane stood out as the only Northern speakers who did not use rhotacization across different speech contexts. Lyn's and Laura's low rates of rhotacization, as noted above, were related to their use of rhotacization in only one context, which mirrored the rhotacization behaviors of Southern speakers such as Yan, Anna, Shell, and Chan. The similarities in rhotacization behaviors among Lyn, Laura, and Jane and Yan, Anna, Shell, and Chan suggested that Lyn, Laura, and Jane had perhaps undergone accommodation to the rhotacization behaviors of speakers of non-Northern Mandarin varieties, that is, incorporated into their linguistic behaviors a reduction in the frequency of rhotacization. This inference, of course, is based on the assumption that rhotacization is most frequent among Northern Mandarin speakers who had never left the Northern regions of China.

As far as contextual/stylistic variation is concerned, rhotacization was exhibited the most among the speakers in conversations with other Chinese interlocutors (family and friends who were either in China or in Singapore at the time of the recording), as can be seen by the points on the topmost line in Chart 6.1 corresponding to higher percentages than the other two speech contexts. It seems to be the case that the Northern speakers used the most rhotacization when they were among other Chinese speakers; in fact, it is also the case that Southern speakers such as Yan, Anna, and Chan rhotacized only when their interlocutors were Mainland Chinese.

An examination of the frequency of rhotacization in terms of the different regional varieties of Mandarin spoken by the interlocutors showed that the speakers' interactions with other speakers from China all had the strongest correlations with the use of rhotacization, as demonstrated by the high factor weights in Table 6.4: 0.775 and 0.749 when speaking with Southern or Northern speakers only; 0.662 with a group of Chinese

interlocutors speaking different regional Mandarin varieties. However, the factor weight associated with speakers' rhotacization in one-on-one interviews with me, a Singaporean, are nearly twice as high as that in group interviews (0.508 versus 0.261), in which my participation was limited to moderating the discussions while the Chinese participants discussed characteristics of Chinese culture in Singapore and in China. The results in Table 6.4 were obtained in a Goldvarb run involving (a) age at arrival; (b) proximity of speakers' family; (c) speakers' purpose for move to Singapore; (d) interlocutors' regional Mandarin variety; (e) familiarity of interlocutors; and (f) formality of context. While all these factor groups except for (b) were individually significant with respect to rhotacization, the best step-up and step-down runs consisted of only factors (d), (a), and (c), in descending ranking of significance.

Table 6.4: Goldvarb results of interaction between variety of Mandarin spoken by interlocutor(s) and degree of rhotacization

Factor groups included in this analysis (significant groups ranked in descending order of significance):
Significant groups: interlocutors' regional Mandarin variety, speakers' purpose for move to Singapore, age at arrival;
Non-significant groups: proximity of speakers' family, familiarity of interlocutors, formality of context

Variety(ies) of Mandarin spoken by Interlocutor(s)[26]	**Rhotacized finals**	**Total # tokens**	**Factor Weight** Input 0.065; p = 0.000
Singaporean Mandarin (Interlocutor=interviewer)	24 8.8%	274	0.507
Northern Mandarin (Self-recordings involving interlocutor(s) from Northern China)	40 27.2%	147	0.746
Southern Mandarin (Self-recordings involving interlocutors from Southern China)	9 11.1%	81	0.783
Combination of Singaporean and Mandarin Chinese (Group interview involving Mainland Chinese interlocutors, with me being the Singaporean interlocutor)	11 3.8%	291	0.259
Combination of Northern and Southern Chinese Mandarin (Self-recordings involving interlocutors from mixed regions in China)	12 25.0%	48	0.628

Log likelihood = -243.176

It should be noted that in Table 6.4 the factor weight of 0.507 corresponding to the speakers' use of rhotacization with Singaporean Mandarin speakers reflects how the speakers behaved linguistically in interactions with me instead of with Singaporean

[26] There were no rhotacized tokens in speakers' interactions with Singaporean speakers (except for me); the tokens representing non-application of rhotacization were knocked out of the statistical analysis and the relationship between Singaporean Mandarin interlocutors and rhotacization are not represented in the table.

Mandarin speakers in general. Ying, Charles, Wei, Sihui, William, Grace, and Rubin, Northern speakers who exhibited greater frequencies of rhotacization than the Southern speakers, rhotacized more when speaking with me, a Singaporean, than with other speakers from China during the group interview, but they did not rhotacize at all when speaking with other Singaporeans. Hence, the discrepancy in the rate of rhotacization among the speakers and the regional linguistic backgrounds of their interlocutors calls into question the factors that influenced the spike in rhotacization in their one-on-one interviews with me.

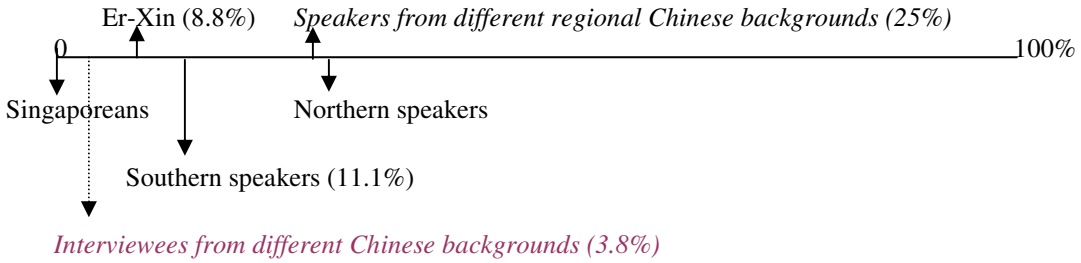
In contrast with the absence of rhotacization in speakers' conversations with other Singaporean interlocutors, the speakers' tendency to rhotacize in interviews with me was therefore likely a reflection of a common perception held by them that my use of Singaporean Mandarin was dissimilar from that used by other Singaporeans. To illustrate, Lyn made a metalinguistic comment during a one-on-one interview with me, which exemplified speakers' perceptions of my use of Mandarin as close to their idea of 'standard' Mandarin. She had stated that she was using a more 'standard' register of Mandarin in the interview, and when asked why, she replied that it was because I had "accurate" Mandarin pronunciation. It might also be that some of them were less-than-consciously "performing" the role of Northern Mainland speakers for me, in a sense further heightening the difference in the Mandarin spoken by Singaporean speakers and them.

The fact that the speakers did not rhotacize when speaking with Singaporean Mandarin speakers, while they rhotacized with me and demonstrated increased tendency to rhotacize as their conversations involved speakers from various regions in China, provided evidence for a continuum of rhotacization that appeared to be interlocutor-directed. Specifically, the regional linguistic backgrounds of the interlocutors as

perceived by the speakers seemed to factor into the different degrees of rhotacization. Thus, the continuum reflects increased rhotacization as speakers progress from interacting with speakers of Singaporean Mandarin to speaking with me, followed by Southern speakers, groups involving Southern and Northern speakers, and finally, Northern speakers.

Figure 6-1: Rhotacization continuum (in terms of percentage)

Interactions involving interlocutors from different regional Chinese Mandarin backgrounds in italics:



However, a continuum based on interlocutors' regional, linguistic backgrounds alone does not seem to suffice in accounting for the low rhotacization rate in the group interview context, in which interactions occurred mainly amongst the Chinese participants. As shown in Table 6.4 and again in Figure 6-1, the low percentage of rhotacized tokens (3.8%) among the group interviewees was significantly lower than the 25% exhibited in the speakers' self-recorded conversations with other Chinese interlocutors from distinct regional, linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, even if my presence in the group interviews in the role of a Singaporean speaker and interviewer might have influenced a decrease in the percentage of rhotacized tokens as compared to the speakers' self-recorded speech contexts in which I was not present, the group interview results should still have reflected a rhotacization rate that was closer to the 8.8% that speakers exhibited when speaking with me only.

The differences in the regional, linguistic backgrounds of the interlocutors were a shared characteristic by the Chinese interlocutors in both the group interview and self-recording contexts. The two types of contexts did differ in terms of formality of interaction in that the self-recording contexts involved naturalistic speech data collected by the speakers at their own discretion and timing without my being there to observe them, while the group interview context involved a more structured type of interaction and discussion taking place while I observed them. It was therefore possible that the wide gap in frequency of rhotacization—between 3.8% and 25%—had been related to differences in formality. The difference in frequencies of rhotacization might also have been affected by differences in how familiar the speakers were with their interlocutors, given that the speakers often already had some degree of relationship with their interlocutors in the self-recorded contexts, while most of the speakers did not know the other Chinese interlocutors participating in the group interviews.

As such, a separate Goldvarb analysis was conducted which assessed formality of context and familiarity of interlocutors as possible correlating factors. Only familiarity of interlocutors was found to be a significant determiner of the different degrees of rhotacization. The degrees of familiarity were differentiated by speakers' interactions with (i) immediate family; (ii) friends and coworkers; (iii) interviewer (me); and (iv) fellow group interview participants, which were coded as 'most familiar', 'familiar', 'less familiar', and 'unfamiliar' respectively. Familiarity between speakers' and their interlocutors constitutes a significant factor group ($p=0.000$), as revealed in a Goldvarb run involving just this factor group. As indicated in Table 6.5, the degree of rhotacization increased with increasing familiarity with interlocutors. The tendency to disfavor rhotacization in group interviews was thus strongly correlated with the speakers' unfamiliarity with the other participants, as shown by the low factor weight of 0.318.

Table 6.5: Goldvarb results of relationship between speakers' degree of familiarity with interlocutors and frequency of rhotacization

Factor groups included in this analysis (significant groups ranked in descending order of significance):
Significant groups: age at arrival, speakers' purpose for move to Singapore, familiarity of interlocutors;
Non-significant groups: interlocutors' regional Mandarin variety, proximity of speakers' family, formality of context

Degree of familiarity with interlocutor(s)	**Rhotacized finals**	**Total # tokens**	**Factor Weight** Input 0.090; p = 0.000
Most familiar	35	199	0.684
	17.6%		
Familiar	26	247	0.545
	10.5%		
Less familiar	24	274	0.494
	8.8%		
Unfamiliar	11	251	0.318
	4.4%		

Log likelihood = -302.184

6.2.4 Summary of general rhotacization findings

The speakers' interlocutor-directed use of rhotacization was not only limited to the nationality or regional, linguistic backgrounds of their interlocutors (as perceived by the speakers), but, rather, also extended to how familiar the speakers were with their interlocutors. At this time, I use "interlocutor-directedness" as a tentative descriptive placeholder for speakers' variable use of rhotacization with different groups of interlocutors. I shall address this notion in greater depth following further investigation into patterns of neutral tone use by the speakers.

Although the speakers generally displayed the highest degree of rhotacization in speech contexts involving other Chinese interlocutors and the lowest degree of rhotacization with Singaporean interlocutors, the point that needs to be emphasized is that

the overall rate of rhotacization among these Chinese speakers is low. As a collective group, these Chinese speakers thus exhibited indication of convergence (to a certain degree) to Singaporean Mandarin norms.

Beyond the general low rate of rhotacization, the frequency of rhotacization varied more amongst the Northern than the Southern speakers. As shown in Chart 6.1, the Northern speakers displayed a wider range of rhotacization percentages (0 – 27.3%) and factor weight scores (0 – 0.801), as opposed to Southern speakers, who exhibited a much narrower range of scores (0 – 5.0% and 0 – 0.362 respectively).

Below, I shall first discuss the variable use of rhotacization among the Northern speakers and follow with a brief comparison of rhotacization usage among the Northern speakers and the four Southern Mandarin speakers who used rhotacization in their speech.

Variation among Northern speakers

Among the Northern speakers the highest frequency of rhotacization generally occurred in conversations with familiar interlocutors from China, while the lowest occurred with unfamiliar Chinese interlocutors. The variable use of rhotacization is most pronounced among Ying, Charles, Wei, Sihui, and William. These speakers showed significant drops of between twenty and sixty percent in their use of rhotacization across the three different speech contexts. In addition to exhibiting the highest rates of rhotacization among all the Northern speakers, Ying, Charles, Wei, and Sihui also patterned similarly in terms of the variety of nominals or demonstratives which were rhotacized. These speakers used rhotacization across most of the speech contexts and also exhibited consistency in their use of rhotacized finals in other recorded speech, that is,

not just exhibiting more rhotacization in the sampled speech but in other recorded speech not included in the analysis.

On the other hand, as compared to the first five speakers, Grace reflected a much lower rhotacization rate with respect to conversations with Chinese interlocutors. She exhibited a difference of only five percent in the rhotacization rate between conversations with Chinese speakers and the one-on-one interview, as compared to William's drop of approximately twenty percent in similar contexts. The other Northern speakers, viz. Rubin, Lyn, and Laura, rhotacized to an even lesser frequency—in only one out of the three contexts.

As noted in the preceding section, the Northern speakers exhibited the greatest frequency of individual variability in the use of rhotacization across different speech contexts. In the next paragraphs, I investigate what other factors are linked significantly with the variable degrees of rhotacization among the Northern speakers.

Speakers' familiarity with their interlocutors has been established above as a factor affecting degrees of rhotacization. A separate Goldvarb analysis was conducted, examining the interaction of speakers' familiarity with interlocutors, age of speakers when they first arrived, and the main purpose of the speakers' move to Singapore, as well as formality of speech context. All but formality of context were significant ($p=0.000$). The correlation of rhotacization with degree of familiarity was in fact ranked lower than with age at arrival and purpose of migration respectively. Results for the three significant factors are displayed in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Relationship of rhotacization usage to speakers' age at arrival, purpose for move to Singapore, and familiarity of interlocutors

Factor groups included in this analysis (significant groups ranked in descending order of significance):
Significant groups: age at arrival, speakers' purpose for move to Singapore, familiarity of interlocutors;
Non-significant groups: Formality of context

Input 0.065, p=0.000	**Most significant**		**Less significant**			**Least significant**			
	Age (group) at arrival		**Purpose of move to Singapore**			**Degree of familiarity with interlocutor(s)**			
	< 35 (younger)	*≥ 35 (older)*	*For pre-arranged work*	*For higher education*	*To be with spouse*	*Most familiar*	*Familiar*	*Less familiar*	*Unfamiliar*
Rhotacized finals	61	35	48	13	35	35	26	24	11
Total # tokens	704	137	500	290	181	199	247	274	251
Percentage of rhotacized finals	8.7%	25.5%	9.6%	4.5%	19.3%	17.6	10.5	8.8	4.4
Factor Weight	0.419	0.879	0.396	0.460	0.806	0.645	0.602	0.499	0.294

Log likelihood = -265.632

As shown in Table 6.6, speakers who were thirty-five years or older at the time of arrival in Singapore were approximately twice as likely to rhotacize as those who were younger (cf. 0.879 compared to 0.419). As the only two Northern speakers falling within this older age group, Ying and Sihui, who were in their mid-to-late thirties and late forties respectively when they moved to Singapore, indeed used more rhotacization than most of the other Northern speakers, as can be seen in Chart 6.1.

Speakers who moved to Singapore to be with family also exhibited similar margins of difference in the use of rhotacization as speakers who were older. Charles and Wei, who respectively married a Singaporean and a Chinese national who was a permanent resident in Singapore, employed almost twice as much rhotacization than the other Northern speakers who moved to Singapore for work or higher education (cf. 0.806 compared to 0.396 and 0.460 respectively). Familial motivations for moving to Singapore may not come across as a straightforward indicator of the higher degrees of rhotacization use among these two speakers, especially when it would seem likely that Charles and Wei would probably converge to the linguistic practices of their spouses.[27] Indeed, both speakers appeared to accommodate their Singaporean interlocutors, but I suggest that their rhotacization rates might have been related to reasons independent of their linguistic behaviors with the locals. Before I go on to explore how such a factor might be associated with specific meanings behind the higher rhotacization percentages, I shall first provide a brief overview of Charles' and Wei's language use.

[27] Charles' wife, a Singaporean, used Singaporean linguistic features in her speech. Wei's wife, a Mainland Chinese from Southern China, spoke a Southern variety of Mandarin, which I had heard in Wei's self-recorded conversation with her. According to Wei, his wife had been living in Singapore for close to ten years and had become a permanent resident. He claimed that her linguistic habits in Singapore consisted of the frequent use of the local varieties of English and Mandarin, given that her job as a nurse required her to interact frequently with Singaporean patients.

In my participant observations of Charles' conversations with his Singaporean wife, which occurred on their lunch break (they work together), his wife employed Singaporean linguistic features only, codeswitching frequently between Singaporean varieties of English and Mandarin. Charles' linguistic behavior while talking to his wife involved the use of Mandarin, English, and codeswitching. He hardly used any rhotacization when he spoke to her in Mandarin.

Charles' Singaporean in-laws, whose main languages were Hokkien and English, reportedly communicated with him in Singaporean Mandarin and English as he did not speak Hokkien. His self-recorded conversations with them were predominantly in Mandarin and did not comprise any rhotacized finals. Instead, his speech consisted of the mixing of Mandarin and English, particularly sentence- and phrase-final particles commonly used by Singaporean speakers of Mandarin and English. It was thus probable that Charles converged to the linguistic practices of his Singaporean relatives when engaging in conversations involving a mixture of English, Mandarin, and codeswitching; since rhotacization was not a part of Charles relatives' Mandarin repertoire, he too, did not exhibit rhotacization when speaking with them.

On the other hand, in his self-recordings of a conversation with a Northern Mandarin-speaking friend from Beijing, his speech involved frequent rhotacizations throughout the conversation, suggesting that rhotacization was a salient feature in his Northern Mandarin repertoire which he used extensively with speakers of Northern Mandarin. Although Charles did use rhotacization during his individual interview session with me, it occurred only sporadically, with rhotacized forms being used mostly in his comments about varieties of Mandarin in China. Thus the topic of discussion also seemed to influence the frequency of rhotacization.

Charles exhibited greater percentage of rhotacization with a Northern Mandarin interlocutor than with me. Specifically, I should point out that nominals of the structure *yi NOUN-r* 'one NOUN', as in *yi dianr* 'one bit=a bit' or *yi bianr* 'one side', which tend to behave grammatically as adverbs, were the most common kinds of rhotacized nominals observed in the speech of the Chinese speakers. While this type of nominal was indeed rhotacized in Charles' self-recording and interview data, there were generally more occurrences of other kinds of nominals, that is, those occurring as standalone noun phrases, in his conversation with his Northern Chinese friend than in the interview with me.

While Charles' speech consisted of a mix of rhotacized forms of the *yi NOUN-r* structure and of regular nouns, Wei's mainly comprised rhotacized forms of regular nouns. Samplings of other portions of Wei's recorded speech indicated that rhotacization was used in a more consistent manner across each context than Charles. However, like Charles, Wei also did not use rhotacization in conversations with non-Mainland interlocutors.

Although Charles and Wei exhibited slight differences in their use of rhotacization in different contexts, both speakers patterned similarly in their use of the highest percentage of rhotacization with familiar Chinese interlocutors and the lowest percentage with other Chinese speakers during their group interviews. Their conversations with Singaporean speakers also revealed a shared absence of rhotacization. Furthermore, both speakers reportedly have adopted local linguistic practices. Charles not only used mainly English with his Singaporean coworkers, but also reportedly used many local expressions (mainly of Singlish influence) in his daily conversations with local Singaporeans. Wei, though reportedly not confident in using English in Singapore, exhibited occasional use of English phrases in his Mandarin discourses with

Singaporeans and also with his Chinese friend. Thus, their self-reported and/or actual linguistic behaviors indicated that Charles and Wei were both converging to local practices at some level though in slightly different ways. I now return to investigate the possible impact that their move to Singapore for family reasons might have on the possibility of Charles' and Wei's differential degrees of convergence to Singaporean English and Mandarin practices.

Both Charles and Wei had stated that they would not have considered moving to Singapore had it not been for the fact that their spouses had established their careers in Singapore and, hence, preferred to be based there. By contrast, the other Northern speakers had migrated to Singapore for their own work and/or higher education. I suggest that Charles' and Wei's use of greater degrees of rhotacization than most of the other Northern speakers might be related to their already established strong familial ties to their spouses in Singapore. I propose that having wives who were longtime residents of Singapore gave Charles and Wei more flexibility than the other Chinese speakers to assimilate at their own pace.

Their relationships with their spouses helped them become permanent residents far quicker than the other Chinese speakers who had also obtained their permanent residency. As a result of their being granted permanent residence status almost as soon as they arrived in Singapore, Charles and Wei both transitioned to Singapore quickly and smoothly[28] without having to worry about their legal status, which all the other speakers on a limited-term employment pass had to concern themselves with at one point or another.[29] Wei and Charles had achieved legal status in Singapore and did not have to

[28] Charles simply transferred from his job in Beijing to that in the same company in Singapore; Wei also quickly found a job at the same company in Singapore that he had been working for in China.

[29] Several other speakers who had not yet obtained permanent resident status, for instance, indicated frustration with the reportedly stringent application process and long waiting times involved in converting

seek ascribed status as others did; therefore, they likely did not have to endeavor to establish their social standing among Singaporeans.

Unlike the other speakers, who first moved to Singapore alone and had to navigate socially and linguistically a new society by themselves, thus probably gaining them quick exposure to a broad base of Singaporeans, Charles and Wei had their spouses (and in Charles' case, Singaporean in-laws) as their primary social and linguistic 'network' in Singapore, which was really not much of a network at all. Both Charles and Wei, having both lived in Singapore for over a year, reportedly spent most of their free time at home with their spouses and had made very few friends outside of work. Hence, I suggest that their having a well set-up relationship with one significant, local connection, as well as having almost immediate access to the rights and privileges of Singapore permanent residents, perhaps lent them the privilege of not having to work as hard at assimilating quickly to Singaporean practices as the other speakers and having different motivations for doing so or not.

Therefore, it might be possible that Charles' and Wei's relatively higher percentages of rhotacization as compared to most of the other Northern speakers reflected flexibility to either converge or not converge to the local norms. Similarly, their use of certain Singaporean linguistic resources in their speech, specifically in their use of Singaporean English, may thus also be a reflection of this 'linguistic flexibility.' As I have introduced in Chapter 4, speakers often revealed less-than complimentary attitudes about Singaporean linguistic practices. Charles and Wei, both possessing strong and

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their status from employment pass holders to residents. I suggest that not knowing when or if they would be given permanent resident status might have had an effect on the speakers' hedging their opinions about Singaporeans and their observations of potentially sensitive topics such as politics. By contrast, the speakers in the study who had been granted permanent resident status or Singaporean citizenship such as William, Grace, Jane, and Lyn, in addition to Charles and Wei, appeared to be more vocal in stating more personal views with regards to topics related to Singapore and Mainland China.

candid opinions—positive and negative—about Singaporean linguistic practices, but having only positive things to say about ritual practices, were representative of those speakers who selectively imagined certain local cultural practices as linked to China. Their display of a pluralism of opinions with respect to the local practices speaks to a certain degree of security in their cultural identification with China. Unfortunately, given the small sample size of the study, the observations about Charles' and Wei's higher rates of rhotacization use were not sufficient to make broader claims about the relationship between stability of social status and linguistic security enabling speakers to explore and use new language features. However, as I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapters, many of the Chinese speakers in fact exhibited "linguistic flexibility," that is, by seemingly adopting the use of local linguistic resources. I suggest that this flexibility might possibly be bolstered by ideological distinctions that they made between the use of Mandarin and English in Singapore, thereby demonstrating their linguistic allegiance to and also security in their ideologies about their own native Mandarin varieties.

So far, I have singled out Ying, Charles, Wei, and Sihui as displaying the highest rates of rhotacization as compared to the other Northern speakers, having found that age at arrival and familial motivations for moving to Singapore were significant factors that differentiated them from the rest of the Northern speakers. As for the other Northern speakers, estimations of the frequency to which some of the Northern speakers had diverged away from the use of Northern Mandarin phonological resources could be made based on the ways in which their rhotacization use patterned with the four Southern speakers who used rhotacization. In the next section, I investigate the patterning in rhotacization usage among the Northern and Southern speakers.

Rhotacization patterns: Northern versus Southern speakers

Unlike Ying, Charles, Wei, and Sihui, Grace exhibited occasional rhotacization in her recorded speech across different contexts. Grace often did not rhotacize at all for long stretches in her speech, particularly when speaking with Singaporean interlocutors such as fellow Mandarin teachers and her students. Whereas Ying, Charles, Wei, and Sihui exhibited rhotacization in a combination of commonly used adverbial nominals (e.g. *yi dianr* 一点儿'a little' *yi huir* 一会儿'a while') and less widely used nominals (e.g. *xing weir* 腥臭儿 'stench'), Grace mostly used non-rhotacized forms. She only occasionally used adverbial nominals like *yi huir* 一会儿 'a while' and *zher* 这儿 'here', the latter of which was more often realized in its non-rhotacized alternate form, *zhe li* 这里 'here'. The only other occurrences of rhotacized forms displayed in Grace's speech were actual diminutive forms of a word, such as *xiao zhuir* 小坠儿 'little pendant'. Thus, Grace's occasional use of rhotacization tended to pattern more with Southern speakers like Yan, who also rhotacized occasionally and displayed a limited range of rhotacized forms in their speech.

The rhotacized forms exhibited in Rubin and Lyn's speech, although few in number, all occurred within the contexts of either talking about Mainland Chinese Mandarin or talking with a close family member from Northern China. Rubin and Lyn tended to employ rhotacization in different words, therein displaying slight similarities with Ying, Charles, Wei, and Sihui but also patterning closely with William in terms of the range of rhotacized forms.

On the other hand, Laura tended to pattern more with Southern speakers such as Anna, Shell, and Chan. The Southern speakers each exhibited infrequent occurrences of rhotacization in their speech. Anna, for instance, did not use rhotacization except in the word *xiao hair* 'little child'. Both in the sampled speech and in other recorded speech

data with Singaporean and Chinese interlocutors, every occurrence of 'little child' was rhotacized. Not knowing why 'little child' was repeatedly rhotacized but not other nouns, I can only posit that this particular word perhaps had some previous saliency to Anna. Rather than applying rhotacization as a phonological process to all nominals, Anna might have lexicalized the idiomatic use of *xiao hair*, and subsequently replaced the use of *xiao hai* with *xiao hair*. Thus, Anna's use of rhotacization might have been limited to a restricted number of lexicalized words, of which *xiao hair* was one.

Certain rhotacized forms may also be more salient than others when it comes to a speaker using rhotacization only in a speech context in which Northern Mandarin phonological features were used. In a group interview among Chan, a Southern speaker, and two Northern speakers, he used *yi kuair* 'together'. It was the only instance in which rhotacization was used in all of Chan's speech data.

The only occurrence of rhotacization in Shell's recorded data was in the word *xiang weir* 'fragrance', which was uttered while I was interviewing her. Shell had lingered on the articulation of *weir* [wəɹ], lengthening both the nucleus and the word-final [ɹ], as shown in Example (49).

(49) Shell's rhotacization: *xiang weir* 'fragrance'
S=Shell, female, early thirties, from Guangdong (SC)

S: li bai liu li bai tian you ren jie hun de shi-ou ne, wow, ((clicks)) lou xia ta men zhu de curry ((laughs)) nei ge **xiang wei:r:** jiu hui, h h piao shang lai le.

'On Saturdays and Sundays, whenever wedding ceremonies take place [on the ground floor of her apartment complex], wow, the curry that they cook downstairs, the **fragrance** just drifts up [towards her apartment].'

Word-final [ɹ] normally would not be emphasized by speakers of any variety of Mandarin. The lengthening of [ɹ], in particular, seemed to have been made to highlight that it was a marked feature in Shell's use of Mandarin. Shell might have been

emphasizing how much she enjoyed the smell of curry wafting into her apartment through the use of lengthened [ɹ]. It might have also been the case that Shell realized that she had accidentally used a Northern phonological feature which was not native to either of us and therein indicating markedness to both of us. Instead of correcting herself by using the non-rhotacized form [wei], she highlighted the markedness of the rhotacized form by lengthening the retroflexed sound, perhaps to acknowledge that she had used the rhotacized form in a context that was probably more befitting the use of [wei] given that we were both speakers of non-rhotacization varieties. She might also have lengthened the retroflex sound to defuse its markedness by invoking emphasis as humor, such that I interpreted that she was probably using rhotacization in jest in that instance and would not have used the rhotacized form under normal circumstances. Shell's view of the rhotacized form as marked gave evidence that she was not a seasoned user of rhotacization, just as I as a Singaporean Mandarin speaker did not employ rhotacization. Hence, I perceived her marked use of [ɹ] as in fact a way in which linguistic solidarity with me was indirectly conveyed.

Thus, in the case of Anna, Chan, and Shell, the use of rhotacization was very rare and perhaps only occurred in the use of salient lexicalized words, salient speech contexts, or emphatic forms. Like the three Southern speakers, Laura hardly used any rhotacized forms at all except for very rare moments in interaction with Northern Mandarin speakers. Her speech included both rhotacized and unrhotacized forms of the same morpheme (word) (cf. rhotacization: zuo bianr 左边儿 'left side' versus non-rhotacization: na bian 那边 'that side=there'). Laura's speech recordings in the different contexts indicated that rhotacization was consistently infrequent. Coming from a Beijing

Mandarin context [30] in which rhotacization was pervasive, Laura's infrequent rhotacization indeed was unusual. In Example (50) Laura expressed her metalinguistic awareness of the general lack of rhotacization in her speech as compared to Beijingers.

(50) Laura's self-distinction from 'Old Beijingers'
L= Laura, female, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)

L: uh qi shi bei jing ren ye you yi dian nei ge, er ((emphatic)) hua //de nei ge kou yin.
…
dan shi hao-ang ((xiang)) wo **bu shi hen yan zhong.** jiu shi, **mei you tai duo** de zhe ge bei jing de er hua yin de zhe ge se cai.

'uh actually Beijingers have a bit of that, *er*-ending sound, that kind of accent…
but it seems like [my r-sounding] I'm **not too serious**. That is, [I] **don't have too much** of this Beijing *er*-ending characteristic.'

In the discourse from which the above excerpt was extracted, Laura in fact constructed herself as a distinctive speaker as compared to speakers of Beijing Mandarin. Constructing Beijingers as having a regional Beijing accent, she claimed not to have any accent. Her claim that she did not have a regional accent indicated a certain degree of willingness to associate more with a supra-local variety, perhaps what she perceived as standard Northern Mandarin, than with a local, regional variety of Mandarin. Thus, Laura's minimal use of rhotacization possibly signaled her affinity towards the use of standardized features of *Putonghua* over the use of regional features.

She cited her speech community in Beijing as made up of Beijing speakers who also did not rhotacize as much as the 'Old Beijingers', Beijingers with generations of affiliations to Beijing. In the above example Laura's use of 'not too serious' and 'don't have too much' indicated that rhotacization was a feature with which she did not identify, perhaps because rhotacization was *iconized* (Irvine & Gal, 2000) with certain properties

[30] Laura was a native Beijinger whose parents had been immigrants to Beijing from another Northern Mandarin-speaking region.

associated with Old Beijingers, with whom she did not identify due to the fact that she had no previous generational connections to Beijing. She did, however, assert her own identity as a different type of Beijinger by identifying her lack of rhotacization as a common practice within a small subset of Beijingers whom she knew.

Although Laura indicated that her low rates of rhotacization could have reflected her rhotacization practices in China, it was likely that she had under-reported her use of rhotacization.[31] As Labov's (1966) New York City study of the use of the English (r) variable and Trudgill's (1983) Norwich study of English (er) have shown, speakers' self-evaluations of their own use of linguistic features often reflect inaccuracies in relation to their actual use. Moreover, Irvine (1989) has further argued that speakers' reports of language use among themselves or others may not always reflect actual linguistic practices, but rather, the linguistic ideologies of the speakers doing the reporting. The ideologies of speakers are thus the "crucial mediating factor" (p. 255) in guiding speakers' reports of language use. Given that Laura's minimal use of rhotacization might have been linked to a specific meaning associated with Old Beijingers and regionality, it would thus be interesting to examine Laura's frequency of neutral tone usage in light of the fact that neutral tone was not pointed out in her metalinguistic commentary as a feature local to Beijing.

Last but not least, Jane, being the only Northern speaker who did not use rhotacization, no doubt demonstrated a sharp divergence from Northern Mandarin patterns. As I will present in the remainder of this chapter as well as the next chapter, Jane's linguistic practices consistently comprised a tendency to use Singaporean features.

[31] Based on her own research on rhotacization use among native Beijing speakers, Qing Zhang pointed out that rhotacization use is extremely prevalent among Beijingers. Therefore, a native Beijinger like Laura should probably still have displayed higher rhotacization rates than that exhibited in her language use in Singapore (personal communication, December 8, 2006).

I will leave the discussion of Jane's local linguistic practices for my analysis of the range in speakers' practices in Chapter 8.

Having presented an approximate breakdown of the rhotacization patternings among the Northern speakers, I now turn to investigate the speakers' use of another Northern Mandarin feature, the neutral tone. I shall then present a theoretical analysis of the patternings among the Northern speakers in their use of rhotacization and neutral tones in the following chapter.

6.3 USE OF THE NEUTRAL TONE

Neutral tone usage among the Northern Mandarin speakers is examined in this section. Unlike the four pitch-bearing tones which form the basis for the tonal system in Mandarin, the neutral tone is in fact a phenomenon marked by a change in stress placement:

> The term 'qingsheng' (literally: 'weak sound') is not a fifth tone in addition to the four tones, but rather a tonal change in any of the four tones occurring as a tone-carrying word is pronounced quickly and weakly. In general, under specific conditions, any word may lose its original tone and be pronounced with a neutral tone.[32]
>
> (Huang & Liao, 1990, p. 118, quoted in Y. Lu, 1995, p. 4)

Described as a Northern Mandarin feature most predominant in Beijing Mandarin (Chao, 1968; Chen, 1999; Y. Lu, 1995), the neutral tone constitutes a bona fide phonological feature in Standard Putonghua. Syllables that bear (or have potential to bear) the neutral tone are specially annotated in Chinese dictionaries with no tonal diacritics to indicate that that particular syllable would not be pronounced with a full tone. Neutral tones occur in a variety of instances. Some instances include specific

[32] Translation from Chinese mine.

function words or morphemes which render predictable neutral tone occurrences, as shown in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Predictable environments in which neutral tones occur

Function morphemes with predictable neutral tones	Examples (**in bold**)	**Content morphemes with predictable neutral tones**	Examples (**in bold**)
Structural morphemes	*wǒ* ***de*** [wǒ**də**] 'mine'	Reduplicated kinship morphemes	*nǎi* ***nai*** [nǎ**ɪ**naɪ] 'grandmother'
Comparative morphemes	*sì* ***de*** [sì**də**] 'as if'	Reduplicated monosyllabic verbs	*kàn* ***kan*** [k^{h}àn**k^{h}an**] lit: 'look look=look'
Adverbial morphemes encoding tense	*lái* ***le*** [lái**lə**] 'came'	Reduplicated monosyllabic verbs of the structure: Verb *yi* Verb	*kàn yī* ***kan*** [k^{h}ànyī**k^{h}an**] lit: 'look one look=look'
Discourse particles	***ba*** **[ba]** 'declarative/ question/imperative particle'	Content morphemes of the structure: *Noun or Adjective* + ***zi*** *Noun or Pronoun* + ***men*** *Noun* + ***tou***	*pàng* ***zi*** [p^{h}aŋ**zɨ**] 'fatso' *tā* ***men*** [t^{h}ā**mən**] 'they/them' *gǔ* ***tou*** [gǔ**t^{h}ou**] 'bone'
Directional morphemes	*shàng* ***lai*** [ʂàŋ**laɪ**] 'come up'		
Locative morphemes	*wài* ***mian*** [wài**miɛn**] 'out**side**'		

(Jing, 2002, p. 22-23)

Other occurrences of neutral tones are less easily predicted by a particular type of morphemes or by specific morphological structures and have been described as *fei xianzhixing* 'non-restrictive' (Y. Lu, 1995) and *gongnengxing* 'functional' (Jing, 2002).

Thus, when individually listed, this type of neutral tone instance is not as limited in number as instances occurring in predictable environments. The neutral tones on words belonging to this class of words can often serve to differentiate meanings, such that the same word can have different meanings with full versus neutral tones (although not all words have variable meanings), for example, with full tone: *dōng**xī*** 'east-west' versus with neutral tone: *dōng**xi*** 'thing' (Chen, 1999; Jing, 2002; Y. Lu, 1995), hence the label 'functional'.

As instances of neutral tone occurrences in the 'predictable' categories tend to be specific to identifiable categories of words, they have also been labeled *xianzhixing* 'restrictive' (Y. Lu, 1995) and *fei gongnengxing* 'non-functional' (Jing, 2002); a list of such words can thus be generated readily based on specific lexical functions or morphological environments. As for the class of 'non-restrictive' words with neutral tones, lists have been collated by Jing (2002) and Lu (1995), obtained through thorough compilations of neutral tone words recognized as 'standard' in the standard Chinese dictionary. In my analysis of neutral tone use among the Chinese speakers, I examined occurrences of words from both 'restrictive' and 'non-restrictive' categories as listed in Jing's (2002) compilation of words. Below, I outline the methodology involved in analyzing the data for neutral tone occurrences.

6.3.2 Sampling of data

Approximately three minutes of recorded speech were sampled from the speakers' recordings of themselves, as well as from their individual and group interview recordings. In the speakers' self-recordings of conversations with their Mainland Chinese friends and family, the point from which sampling began was selected at random. For the individual interviews, the speech samples were all obtained from sections of the interview

pertaining to speakers' views on *Putonghua* and linguistic practices in China. This particular segment of the interview was chosen mainly for ease of consistency in selecting a point in the interview to start with analysis. As for the group interviews, the speech samples were mostly drawn from speakers' discussions of cultural practices related to Chineseness among Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese nationals.

As the length of most of the speakers' self-recordings lasted approximately three to five minutes, the samples for all three speech contexts were limited to three minutes so as to keep the length of speech data across the different contexts consistent. The speech of some of the speakers was not analyzed in certain contexts because of one the following reasons: (i) the participants did not record their conversations with other Chinese interlocutors (Shell, Gillian, and Dabaicai); (ii) the amount of recorded speech was too short (Laura, Li Chen, and Xiaobo) or the recorded speech was not in Mandarin (Jane) and thus did not constitute sufficient data for analysis; or (iii) the speakers did not participate in the group interview (William).

The number of occurrences of neutral and full tones in each three-minute sample is reflected in Table 6.8. The table also shows the percentages of neutral tone used by each speaker across the different contexts. In addition, each speaker's average realization of neutral tone is also displayed in terms of a percentage. The percentage of average neutral tone used is calculated by dividing the sum of all neutral tone tokens by the total number of possible neutral tone environments, that is, the sum of neutral tone and full tone tokens. Based on their average use of neutral tones, the speakers were ranked by decreasing frequency of neutral tone usage.

Table 6.8: Counts of neutral tone tokens obtained in three different speech contexts

Speaker	With familiar interlocutors from China			With interviewer			With other Chinese group interviewees			Average % NT
	NT+	FT^	% NT realization	NT	FT	% NT realization	NT	FT	% NT realization	
Rubin	7	2	**77.8%**	8	3	**72.7%**	16	2	**88.9%**	**81.6%**
Lyn	4	2	**66.7%**	5	3	**62.5%**	17	2	**89.5%**	**78.8%**
Sihui	6	2	**75.0%**	9	4	**69.2%**	9	3	**75.0%**	**72.7%**
Wei	7	0	**100.0%**	15	9	**62.5%**	5	10	**33.3%**	**58.7%**
Li Chen			**NA**[33]	5	3	**62.5%**	9	7	**56.3%**	**58.3%**
Laura	6	3	**66.7%**	5	7	**41.7%**			**NA**	**52.4%**
Charles	6	2	**75.0%**	10	7	**58.8%**	7	13	**35.0%**	**51.1%**
William	16	19	**45.7%**	11	7	**61.1%**			**NA**	**50.9%**
Anna	2	8	**20.0%**	10	7	**58.8%**	14	12	**53.8%**	**49.1%**
Dan	3	2	**60.0%**	12	12	**50.0%**	3	9	**25.0%**	**43.9%**
Ying	9	7	**56.3%**	4	11	**26.7%**	10	27	**27.0%**	**33.8%**
Grace	7	10	**41.2%**	8	16	**33.3%**	4	12	**25.0%**	**33.3%**
Yan	4	4	**50.0%**	7	7	**50.0%**	3	17	**15.0%**	**33.3%**
Dabaicai			**NA**	6	14	**30.0%**	2	5	**28.6%**	**29.6%**
Xiaobo	1	4	**20.0%**	0	0	**0.0%**	1	2	**33.3%**	**25.0%**
Shell			**NA**	4	12	**25.0%**	4	19	**17.4%**	**20.5%**
Yilin	6	11	**35.3%**	0	15	**0.0%**	3	12	**20.0%**	**19.1%**
Jane	2	0	**100.0%**			**NA**	2	18	**10.0%**	**18.2%**
Chan	3	6	**33.3%**	2	14	**12.5%**	1	11	**8.3%**	**16.2%**
Julia	2	3	**40.0%**	1	10	**9.1%**	0	13	**0.0%**	**10.3%**
Gillian			**NA**	2	28	**6.7%**	2	15	**11.8%**	**8.5%**

+ Number of **Neutral Tone** tokens obtained in a 3-minute sample
^ Number of **Full Tone** tokens obtained in a 3-minute sample
* Speakers whose names are in a dark font are Northern Mandarin speakers. The names in a lighter font are Southern Mandarin speakers.

6.3.3 Results of neutral tone usage

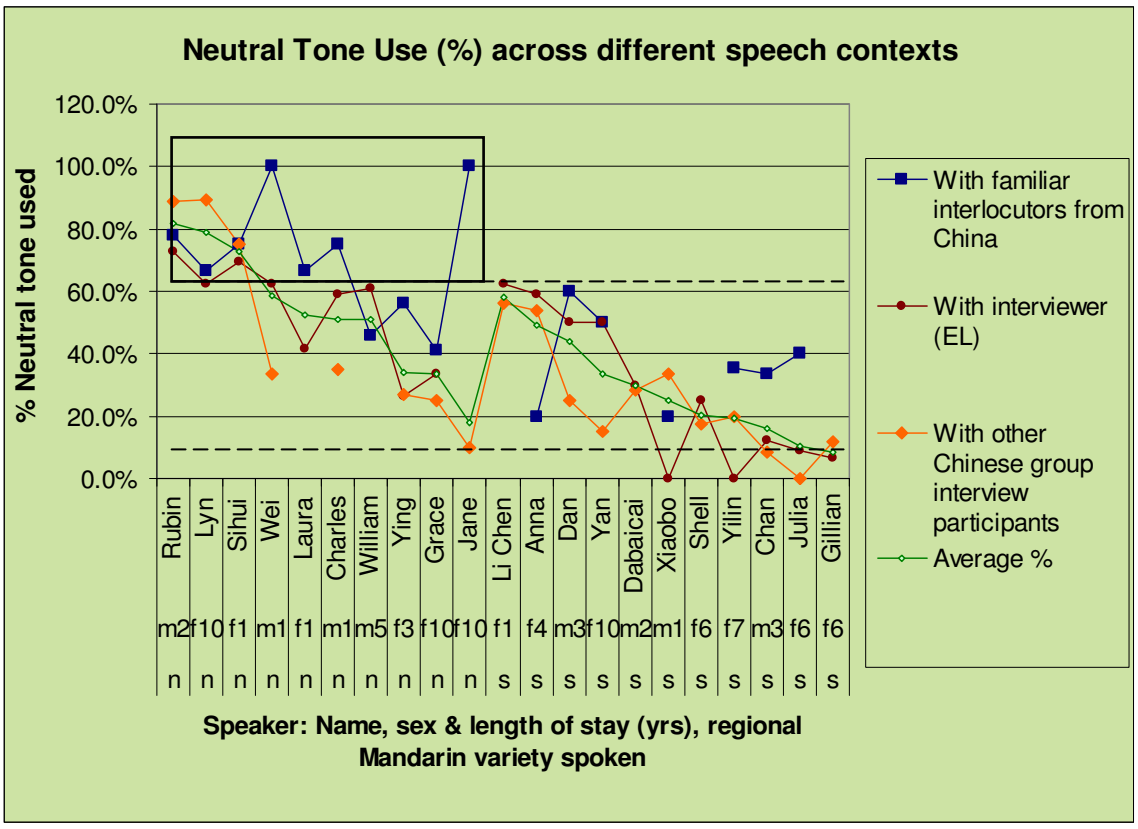
As Table 6.8 shows, most of the Northern speakers ranked higher than the Southern speakers in their average degree of neutral tone use, thus reflecting the general pattern of neutral tone use among Northern and Southern speakers described above. However, unlike the frequency to which rhotacization was employed among the Northern

[33] 'NA' indicates that recordings were not obtained for those particular contexts.

versus the Southern speakers, the frequency of variability between the use of neutral versus full tone had a degree of overlap among the Northern and Southern speakers.

Chart 6.2 provides a graphical representation of the percentages of neutral tones used among the speakers in the various speech contexts. The speakers have been grouped by the regional variety of Mandarin they spoke; Northern speakers are shown on the left side of the graph while Southern speakers are shown on the right. Within each regional group, speakers have been ranked from left to right in decreasing percentage of neutral tone use.

Chart 6.2: Percentage of neutral tone use across the different speech contexts, as broken down by Northern versus Southern speakers



The overlapping degrees of neutral tone use among the Northern and Southern speakers can be seen by the large number of points lying within an approximate range of 10 to 62 percent on the chart (in the area between the dotted lines). Within this area on the chart, it can be seen that certain Northern speakers' variable use of the neutral tone in different speech contexts patterned with that of a few of the Southern speakers. For instance, Ying's degrees of neutral tone use in familiar discourses with Chinese interlocutors and with group interview participants approximated Dan's. Degrees of overlap were also observed through speakers' frequency of neutral tone use across the different contexts. To illustrate, William, a Northern speaker, mirrored Li Chen's and Anna's percentages of use of the neutral tone in the one-on-one interview context; all three speakers also exhibited a greater frequency of neutral tone usage in the one-on-one interview than with other Mainland Chinese interlocutors, whether in group interview context or in self-recorded conversations with familiar interlocutors. In summary, although the Northern speakers in the study generally used a larger percentage of neutral tones than the Southern speakers, a significant number of the Northern speakers (6 out of 10) exhibited similar frequencies of neutral tone use in one or more contexts as some of the Southern speakers.

Across the different speech contexts, the greatest degree of neutral tone usage was mostly exhibited in speakers' self-recordings of conversations with their Chinese friends and family. Many of the Northern speakers as well as most of the Southern speakers used the least percentage of neutral tones in the group interview context. That most of the speakers used a greater percentage of neutral tone in one-on-one interviews than in group interview contexts mirrored the findings for rhotacization described above, which indicated that speakers used more rhotacization in discourses with me than with other Chinese speakers with whom they were not as familiar. The similar patterns in using the

greatest frequency of neutral tones with familiar Chinese interlocutors, followed by interactions with me, and lastly among fellow group interviewees thus provided further indication that speakers' relationships with their interlocutors did play a significant role in influencing the degree to which many of these Chinese speakers used the neutral tone.

6.3.4 Neutral tone usage: Northern versus Southern speakers

In general, the Northern speakers exhibited greater differences in the frequency of neutral tone used among the different contexts as compared to most of the Southern speakers. Points on the chart corresponding to the Southern speakers' use of neutral tones in the various contexts were closer together than those corresponding to the Northern speakers'. Specifically, the percentages of neutral tone were closer together in the one-on-one and group interview contexts among the Southern speakers than among the Northern speakers. 7 of the 11 Southern speakers exhibited approximately less than a five percent difference in their use of neutral tones in the two contexts while showing greater variability with familiar interlocutors who were mostly based in China. In contrast, only two Northern speakers (Sihui and Grace) showed similar margins of difference in their neutral tone use in the same two contexts. The Southern speakers' greater degrees of similarity in the percentages of neutral tone use across different contexts thus contrasts with the variability among the Northern speakers.

With the exception of Rubin, Lyn, and Sihui, whose use of neutral tones lay within the 60-90 percent range across the different speech contexts, the remaining Northern speakers all displayed greater degrees of variability than the Southern speakers. William, Ying, and Grace, using neutral tones less than 60 percent of the time in the three contexts, patterned most closely with the Southern speakers' degrees of neutral tone usage. Wei, Laura, Charles, and Jane patterned closely together and can be differentiated

from William, Ying, and Grace because of their higher degrees of neutral tone use in their self-recorded conversations with Chinese friends and family, which as noted above, exceeded the percentages corresponding to the Southern speakers.

Patterns in neutral tone usage amongst the Northern speakers

As highlighted within the boxed area above the topmost dotted line in Chart 6.2, there is a notable difference in the percentages of neutral tone used among Northern speakers as compared to Southern speakers. None of the Southern speakers exhibited more than 60 percent of neutral tone usage whereas most of the Northern speakers did. In particular, in the self-recording context involving conversations with familiar Chinese interlocutors, as many as 7 of the 10 Northern speakers exhibited a greater frequency of neutral tone use than any of the Southern speakers. As mentioned above, in the other two contexts, many of the Northern speakers patterned with a majority of the Southern speakers by exhibiting similar percentage ranges of neutral tone use.

Of the seven Northern speakers whose percentages of neutral tone use were higher than the Southern speakers in the self-recording context, Rubin, Lyn, and Sihui patterned distinctly in their use of neutral tones from Wei, Laura, Charles, and Jane. Rubin, Lyn, and Sihui displayed consistently high levels of neutral tone usage across the three speech contexts, having percentages greater than 60 percent. They also all shared similarities in using more neutral tones in the group interview context than the other two contexts. This particular speech pattern was not observed at all for the rest of the Northern speakers. These three speakers were distinguished from the other Northern speakers by their larger levels of neutral tone use and by their unique departure from the rest of the speakers in using more neutral tones with other Chinese interlocutors than with me.

Sihui's high percentage of neutral tone use put her among speakers exhibiting the greatest frequencies of Northern phonological feature usage. She was the only speaker who ranked high on the use of both neutral tones and rhotacization. She was also the only Northern speaker whose percentages of neutral tones in the three contexts were closely clustered together. All other Northern speakers displayed variability in their frequency of neutral tone use across the different contexts. Unlike Sihui, Rubin and Lyn patterned more closely with each other in terms of showing slightly greater variability in the three contexts. Patterning like no other Northern speaker, Rubin and Lyn both used higher percentages of neutral tones in the group interview context than in the other two contexts. Not only were their use of neutral tones in the group interview context comparable, but they also exhibited similar trends in the relative percentage decrease from the self-recording context to the personal interview context. The similarities observed in their use of neutral tones might be linked with the fact that both of them were originally from the Northern province of Shandong and, thus, perhaps shared similar regional linguistic norms.

In contrast to Rubin, Lyn, and Sihui's neutral tone usage, which was always above the 60 percent mark in the three different contexts, Wei, Laura, Charles, and Jane exhibited percentages that were below 60 percent for at least one of the contexts. Although their percentages of neutral tones in the self-recording context were high, these speakers had huge percentage drops of more than 20 percent between the context involving familiar Mainland Chinese interlocutors and the other context(s). The frequency of neutral tone use in one or two of the contexts even dropped to levels comparable to those of the Southern speakers.

Among the four speakers, Laura's percentage of neutral tones was lowest in the self-recording context. At just over 40 percent, Laura's neutral tone usage in the one-on-

one interview context was also lower than Wei's and Charles' (there was no corresponding percentage for Jane). Laura's ranking with respect to her overall neutral tone use was higher than that recorded for her rhotacization. On the other hand, Wei and Charles seemed to pattern more closely together and exhibited relatively higher percentages than Laura in the self-recording and one-on-one interview contexts. The percentages in the self-recording context differed between the two speakers, but were otherwise quite close in their personal and group interviews. Wei's and Charles' near-similar degrees of neutral tone use thus echoed similarities in their rhotacization trends.

Although Jane was included in the group with Wei, Charles, and Laura, her neutral tone use actually stood out from the other three speakers. Her overall ranking among all the speakers, as shown in Table 6.8 was in fact among the lowest. Her neutral tone usage dropped from 100 percent in the self-recording context to a mere 10 percent in the group interview context. This large percentage dip was unusual.

In the analysis of Jane's self-recorded speech, only two possible neutral tone environments were noted in the self-recorded speech context. Therefore, it was very possible that the limited number of environments in which neutral tone could occur was a reliable reflection of her neutral tone usage in that context. A more reliable reflection of Jane's neutral tone usage might have been available in her group interview data, in which a greater number of tokens was analyzed than in the self-recording context. From her group interview data, the extremely low percentage of neutral tone suggested that Jane's actual neutral tones use in the self-recording context might not have been as high as was calculated.

In addition, in my qualitative observations of Jane's Mandarin use with Mainland Chinese students whom she mentored, neutral tones (and rhotacization instances) were not noted. My general observations of Jane's speech in other contexts, such as talking

with her Singaporean mother-in-law or another Chinese friend, all pointed to Jane's tendency to use the full tone (and non-rhotacized forms) in her speech. Hence, it might actually have been more likely that Jane's low overall neutral tone usage patterned independently of the other Northern speakers. Jane's neutral tone usage thus mirrored the absence of rhotacization in her speech (seen above in Section 6.2.4, p.154). All in all, her linguistic behaviors seemed to pattern more closely with that of the Southern speakers who used the least percentages of the two Northern phonological features than with that of the other Northern speakers.

By using only up to 60 percent of neutral tones in the three speech contexts, the remaining Northern speakers (William, Ying, and Grace) patterned more with the Southern speakers than with the other Northern speakers. The closest approximation of Ying's and Grace's neutral tone use to that of a Southern speaker's was that of Yan's, while Wiliam's was that of Anna's (comparing average percentages). The overlap in neutral tone percentages amongst these speakers might thus indicate that William, Ying, and Grace converged the most out of all the Northern speakers to the frequencies with which the Southern speakers used neutral tones.

Speakers' convergence to their interlocutors' varieties of Mandarin also appeared to have been more evident with some interlocutors than others, suggesting that the speakers might have aligned more closely with the linguistic norms of certain speakers (or dialects) than others. For instance, William used a higher percentage of neutral tones when I was interviewing him than with his Chinese coworker, a Southern Mandarin speaker with a heavy Fujian accent.[34] Even though the Southern coworker's linguistic

[34] This speaker from Fujian frequently employed [h] in place of /f/, where a word such as *xingfu*, pronounced in standard *Putonghua as* [ɕɪŋ**f**u], would be pronounced as [ɕɪŋ**h**u]. Another phonological variation exhibited in this speaker's speech was the fronting of postalveolar sounds like *zh* [tʂ] *ch* [tʂ^{h}] *sh*

behavior and mine share a similar absence of neutral tones, I suggest that the coworker's Fujian Mandarin variety marked greater dialectal difference from William's Northern Mandarin dialect than my variety of Mandarin. Presumably, William might have accommodated—that is, used fewer features that conveyed dialectal difference from his interlocutor—by reducing his neutral tone usage more with the friend than with me. Unfortunately, it is not clear that this supposition holds, given that other factors could possibly have influenced William's use of fewer neutral tones with his compatriot. One factor could be related to the communicative norms that had been established between William and his coworker having been grounded in interactions that mostly took place in a work environment among Singaporean coworkers who did not use neutral tones as far as I was able to discern from William's self-recording; the use of Northern Mandarin features might thus have been disfavored in William's interaction with the Southern Chinese coworker.

At the same time, it was also possible that mutual convergence between the Northern and Southern speakers occurred, such that the Southern speakers might have used more of the Northern features with the Northern speakers just as the Northern speakers might have used less with them. For instance, Anna's high percentage of neutral tones in the group interview context, where two Northern speakers (Grace and Ying) and one other Southern speaker (Yilin) were present, could have been related to convergence to the Northern speakers. Conversely, Grace's and Ying's low neutral tone percentages in the same context could also have been a reflection of convergence to Anna and Yilin.

[ʂ] to alveolar sounds like *z* [ts] *c* [ts^{h}] *s* [s] respectively. Both of these phonological phenomena have been described as occurring in Taiwanese Mandarin as well (Li and Thompson, 1981), presumably because of the proximity between Fujian and Taiwan.

To briefly summarize, the Northern speakers' different frequencies of use of neutral tones can be roughly broken down into three groups: (i) high neutral tone use involving high percentages (greater than sixty percent) in all three speech contexts; (ii) mid-range neutral tone usage where speakers demonstrated high percentages in certain contexts (generally the self-recording context with Chinese friends or family) but displaying percentages in other contexts, comparable to those of some Southern speakers in the same contexts; (iii) low neutral tone use where percentages of neutral tones were low (sixty percent or less) in all three contexts and where average percentages were comparable to those of Southern speakers. In the concluding section of this chapter, I will summarize the patterns found to exist (or not) between the Northern speakers' variable frequencies of rhotacization and neutral tone use.

6.4 SPEAKER PATTERNS IN RHOTACIZATION AND NEUTRAL TONE USAGE

Neutral tones tended to be used among more speakers (Northern and Southern) than rhotacization. Neutral tones were also used more across the different contexts. I posit that based on the large number of Southern speakers who employed neutral tones and a significantly smaller number that employed rhotacization, the use of neutral tones was less of a regional marker of Northern Chinese varieties than rhotacization. I examine below patterns of consistency in the use of these two Northern features among the Northern speakers.

Most of the other Northern speakers demonstrated variation between their use of rhotacization and neutral tones. For instance, Ying, who rhotacized the most of all the speakers, actually displayed one of the lowest percentages of neutral tones among the Northern speakers. The only exceptions to this generalization were Sihui and Jane, who

exhibited the highest and lowest overall percentages respectively in their use of the two phonological features.

Through the consistency exhibited in Sihui's and Jane's degrees of use of the features, it was possible to determine general trends in their use of Mandarin in Singapore. The two speakers represented two very different ways in which Northern speakers used the Mandarin resources available to them in Singapore. In the case of Jane, the low percentages of rhotacization and neutral tones indicated more overlap with the Southern as well as Singaporean speakers than with many of the Northern speakers. In Sihui's case, the fact that the two Northern features were both used in high frequencies signaled her overall tendency towards using more Northern than local Mandarin resources. However, it should be noted that this 'tendency' towards the use of one type of resource over another is used as a broad description of speakers' general use of Mandarin in Singapore; a close look at their use of the two features in the different contexts would show, of course, that the 'tendency' fluctuated from one context to another.

As for the other Northern speakers, the general tendency to use Mandarin features from one region over another was less evident, as they exhibited greater fluctuations in both overall percentages of use of each feature and their rankings amongst the speakers. Given that each speaker's ranking in the use of each phonological feature was only relative to another speaker's, a comparison of speakers' rankings for each feature might not be a very accurate or direct way of investigating consistency in use of Northern features over Southern (or Singaporean) features. However, I argue that a comparison of the patterns observed in the rankings of groups of individuals may provide an approximate gauge of possible meanings behind shared degrees of use of the phonological features.

Rubin and Lyn, who were both ranked just above the Southern speakers who used rhotacization, once again were ranked in close proximity to each other. Their closeness in ranking might perhaps be attributed to their shared regional linguistic influences from the Northern Chinese province of Shandong. The fact that they both ranked highest in their use of the neutral tone but were ranked among the lowest among the Northern speakers for rhotacization might indicate that rhotacization is not as prevalent in the Shandong variety as is the neutral tone. There seemed to be conflicting information as to whether this supposition was true. Rubin stated that rhotacization was not frequently used in his Shandong dialect, whereas Lyn indicated that it was a feature used in her Shandong variety. (Incidentally, Jane, who did not use any rhotacization at all, was also from Shandong. However, she did not comment about whether rhotacization was common to the region.)

In the absence of conclusive evidence as to the prevalence of rhotacization in the Shandong variety of Mandarin, I sought to investigate other possible meanings for the discrepancy between the use of the two phonological features. Some of the speakers' metalinguistic remarks suggested that the two features were salient to them to different degrees. There seemed to be more consensus among the speakers, including Rubin and Lyn, that rhotacization was a marker of Northern Mandarin varieties, whereas neutral tone usage was not once mentioned as a feature of Northern Mandarin. A possible explanation that the speakers did not associate neutral tone usage as directly with Northern varieties as they did with rhotacization could be linked with the fact that neutral tones are generally also used in non-Northern Mandarin varieties, albeit limited to a narrower range of phonological (i.e. stress or prosodic) contexts or semantic functions (Chen, 1999; Jing, 2002). This point seemed to be borne out by the use of neutral tones among the Southern speakers in this study. Thus, the fact that the use of neutral tones is

not just restricted to Northern speakers—even though neutral tones are used to a greater degree by Northerners—might have made it perceived as a less prominent Northern feature than rhotacization.

Potentially, the speakers' greater awareness of rhotacization as a salient Northern feature to them might have had implications for their actual usage in the Singaporean context. The speakers, as such, perhaps used rhotacization to a lesser frequency than they did with neutral tones. In Rubin's case, his reduced usage of rhotacization might actually also be related to his reported infrequent use of the retroflex feature. For Lyn, the use of rhotacization in Singapore reportedly marred clarity in her speech with Singaporeans (see Example (51) below); in order to speak as clearly as possible to be understood by Singaporeans, she had learned to reduce the use of rhotacized forms.

(51) Lyn's self-report on frequency of use of rhotacization
Ly= Lyn, female, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)
E= Er-Xin

Ly: wo jueR: zai zh- suo yi wo jiu jueR: zi ji de yin tai zhong le. mm. dan Ri ((shi))hui jin liang jian di eR yin de yong fa.

'I feel over here that's why I feel my [Putonghua] 'tone' is too strong. But [I will] try my best to reduce [my] use of *er*-sound [=rhotacization].'

…

Ly: xin -a po da gai, jiu hui, um, jiang de yue jian dan, *unh*, um, eR yin yue qing yue hao,

'[In] Singapore [I] will, um, [it is best to] speak as simply as possible, unh, um, use as little *er*-sound [=rhotacization] as possible'

E: m m m.

Ly: dui, jiang de yue qing chu yue hao.

'that's right, speak as clearly as possible.'

The supposition that rhotacization might be salient to speakers as more distinctive as a Northern feature than the neutral tone might also pertain to other speakers such as

Laura. Laura was ranked fairly high with respect to neutral tone use, showing an average percentage of approximately fifty percent, whereas she was ranked one of the lowest for rhotacization, exhibiting an average of only about five percent of rhotacized forms. Although Laura's percentages of use of both features were not exactly similar to those of Rubin and Lyn, she shared a common trend of using more neutral tones than rhotacized forms. As pointed out above, Laura did not consider her use of rhotacization to be as "serious" as other Beijingers (i.e. Old Beijingers). This self-reported observation might indeed be linked with her very low percentages of rhotacized forms; since neutral tones were not included in her characterization of Beijingers or even Northern speakers, it was therefore possible that neutral tones were not salient to her as a Northern feature.

Another pair of speakers found to pattern similarly in their use of rhotacization and neutral tones was Wei and Charles. However, they were not ranked among speakers with the highest percentages of neutral tone use as they were with rhotacization use. As noted in the discussion of Wei's and Charles' rhotacization, their relatively higher frequencies of rhotacization might have been related to their having flexibility to use *any* of the linguistic resources available to them as they might not have had to use local linguistic resources like the other speakers to establish their standing among Singaporeans. By the same token, they could thus just as easily have used fewer Northern Mandarin resources and more Southern (or Singaporean) linguistic resources. In this respect, the fact that their neutral tone use patterned with the Southern speakers might be an indication of their linguistic flexibility, as pointed out above.

However, I suggest that the low frequencies of rhotacization by all the speakers need to be taken into careful consideration in the assessment of Wei's and Charles' actual linguistic patternings in their use of the two features. It should be noted that even though Charles and Wei favored rhotacization (cf. high factor weights in Table 6.3), my

qualitative examination of their rhotacization usage in and beyond the sampled data indicated that rhotacization occurred with high frequencies only in contexts involving their friends and family from China. The low frequencies to which Charles and Wei used rhotacization in all but speech contexts with Northern Mandarin-speaking interlocutors signaled a general convergence to the use of non-rhotacized forms. As such, I argue that Charles and Wei in fact displayed convergence to Singaporean Mandarin practices when speaking with non-Northern Mandarin speakers. Like Wei and Charles, William and Grace patterned with the Southern speakers in neutral tone use. They showed even smaller degrees of rhotacization than Wei and Charles. Thus, I suggest that William and Grace, like Wei and Charles, also demonstrated convergence to the use of local, Singaporean phonological features more than they retained the use of non-local, Northern Mandarin ones in contexts with non-Northern speakers.

In this section, I have attempted to find patterns among the Northern speakers in their use of both of the phonological features analyzed. I hope to have successfully delineated three groups of speakers from the patterns observed:

a) Speakers consistent in their use of both features, such that it was apparent which type of phonological resources (non-local, i.e. Northern Mandarin, versus local, i.e. Singaporean Mandarin) was used dominantly by the speakers (viz. Sihui and Jane);
b) Speakers with less consistent use of Northern Mandarin phonological features, but whose low degrees of neutral tone usage coupled with context-dependent low percentages of rhotacization indicate general convergence to local Mandarin phonological resources in dealings with non-Northern speakers (viz. Charles, Wei, William, and Grace); and
c) Speakers with inconsistent use of Northern Mandarin phonological features, but where variation in the use of the two features might be linked with salient properties

or meanings associated with the use of each of the features (viz. Rubin, Lyn, and Laura—high neutral tone usage, low rhotacization; Ying—low neutral tone usage, high rhotacization).

I have also analyzed speakers' convergence to the use of Non-Northern features as indicative of accommodation in some ways to Singaporean linguistic norms. However, I propose that "convergence" or "accommodation" are merely descriptions of an apparent lack of use of the Northern features among many of the Northern speakers, but that convergence, as we see it, may be rooted in as well as constitute deeper meanings, considering the fact that many of the speakers had signaled ideological distance from Singaporean linguistic practices. In the chapter that follows, I examine the Chinese speakers' actual use of Singaporean linguistic resources, seeking to further investigate the social and linguistic meanings conveyed through the speakers' overall linguistic practices in the Singaporean context.

Chapter 7: Patterns in the use of utterance-final particles and mixed use of bilingual resources

In the previous chapter I examined the use of Northern features in Mainland Mandarin among the Chinese expatriates, in particular, those who spoke Northern varieties of Mandarin natively. The use of Mainland Mandarin resources indicated that influences from some speakers' native Mandarin varieties may have perdured in their use of Mandarin in Singapore. To gain an understanding of the speakers' range of linguistic behaviors within the local (i.e. Singaporean) context, it would be necessary to examine to what extent local linguistic resources had affected their use of language. Therefore, this chapter examines the extents to which speakers tapped into the local linguistic resources of the various language varieties available in Singapore. I explore the speakers' engagement in two particular linguistic practices widespread among Chinese Singaporeans: the use of utterance-final particles in Mandarin or English discourses and the alternating use of English and Mandarin in discourse.

Sociolinguistic investigation is increasingly concerned with ways in which ideological distinctions inform social meanings constructed through indexical relationships between linguistic practices and ideologies (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004b; Irvine & Gal, 2000). Expanding on the investigation in Chapter 5 of the speakers' metalinguistic knowledge of the social meanings associated with the language varieties used in the Singaporean speech community, this chapter examines the construction of local as well as non-local meanings by the speakers' use of Singaporean language resources as well as explores the extents to which speakers aligned with or disaligned from locally constructed social meanings of the local linguistic practices.

7.1 USE OF UTTERANCE-FINAL PARTICLES

In Example (52) below, while explaining to me why he uses local linguistic features in interactions with Singaporeans such as taxi drivers, Wei utters the phrase *rong he law*[35] 'to assimilate PART-*law*'. Realizing that he has just used the utterance-final particle (henceforth, final particle) *law*, he immediately follows with an emphatic iteration of the particle, performing the phrase *rong he law* yet another time as if to show me actual, real-time evidence of his use of this local linguistic feature.

(52) *"rong he law"*
W= Wei, male, late twenties, from Inner Mongolia (NC)

1 W: dai yi dian zhe mian di fang xing de// xi guan.

[I engage in] local [linguistic] //practices.

2 E: //na mu di jiu shi-

//the purpose being-

3 W: rong he ***law***. aeh. **"*law*"** ((emphatic)). **"**rong he ***law*****"** ((repeating phrase; emphatic)).

to assimilate **PART-*law***. PART. "**PART-*law***" ((**emphatic**)) "to assimilate **PART-*law***" **((emphatic))**.

4 E: na ni zai zhong guo bu xi guan yong zhe ge zhe **"*law*"** hai you, //**"*lah*."**

So in China you don't usually use this, this "**PART-*law***" and "**PART-*lah***."

5 W: //mei you. ((clicks)) ye yong. dan shi, jiu-i shuo, (2.8) you yi dian xiao-ao ((xiao)) de cha yi ***lah***=wo bu hui te bie qing -u ((chu)) -e ((de)) biao da.

//no [i.e. negating E's question]. ((clicks)) [I do] use [it]. However, it's like, (2.8) there's a little bit of difference **PART-*lah***=I don't know how to explain it clearly.

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[35] In other chapters, I have glossed particles occurring in the speakers' discourses as 'PART'. The local utterance-final particles discussed in this section on final particle usage are in boldface and glossed slightly differently using '**PART-*(transliteration of particle)***', e.g. '**PART-*lah***', to differentiate among the various final particles; all other particles not relevant to the discussion in this chapter remain glossed as 'PART'.

6 E: m.

7 W: zhe mian de "rong he ***law***" gen, zai zhong guo ni ye hui yong dao. dan shi, u:h, ta, zhe mian bi –ao ((jiao)) xi guan xing de duo ((emphatic)) yong. zai, ou er you xie shi hou, (1) bu xu yao yong huo zhe bu ying gai yong de shi–our ((hou)) ye hui qu, yong dao.

over here [the phrase] "assimilate **PART-*law***" is also used in China. However, u:h, over here [the particles] tend to be frequently used out of practice. [In Singapore people] use [particles] even in instances where (1) [they] are not needed or should not be used.

Indeed, as Wei has claimed, final particles are part of a Mainland Mandarin speaker's repertoire. In his metalinguistic response to my question in line 4 about whether he used particles such as *lah* and *law* in China (in lines 5 and 7), Wei shifts away from identifying with his own use of final particles to constructing a gatekeeping stance in which he de-legitimates Singaporeans' use of particles by drawing on comparisons with Mandarin final particles as used in China. He projects Singaporeans' use of final particles as somehow violating a norm for Mainland Chinese final particle use. The above excerpt captures many of the expatriates' awareness of final particles being used in high frequency as a local linguistic practice, at the same time, conveying dissonance with respect to particles seemingly being overused among Singaporeans.

The particle *law* exhibited in Wei's speech, along with the other final particles I focus on in this dissertation, have not been recorded as used in Mainland Mandarin varieties (cf. Chao, 1968; C. N. Li & Thompson, 1981), though they are used in other language varieties spoken on the Mainland. One of the particles, *lah*, which is used in Mainland Mandarin, is also used widely by Singaporean speakers, albeit in a broader sense than that used in Mainland Mandarin, which I will detail below. The particles examined in this chapter are mainly used in Southern Chinese regional languages such as Cantonese and Hokkien (cf. M. K. M. Chan, 1999; Kwok, 1984; Ouyang, 1993; Yang,

2002). As mentioned in Chapter 4, a large portion of the Chinese Singaporean population has linguistic ties to those languages. Zhou (2002) has argued that the pervasiveness of those Southern Chinese languages in Singapore—prior to Mandarin's being instituted as the official Chinese language—had resulted in Singaporean Mandarin's being influenced by features from those languages.

Though the final particles used by Singaporean speakers are not all used in Mainland Mandarin, they are akin to a specific category of Mandarin particles occurring phrase- or sentence-finally called *yu zhu ci* 'helping words' (Chao, 1968). As they signal modality, tone of voice, and even aspect, the particles are also labeled as *yu qi ci* 'modal words', (Alleton, 1981; Chu, 1998; Y. Li *et al.*, 1990; S. Lu, 1992; Tang & Tang, 1997; Tiee, 1986; L. Wang, 1987; Zhu, 1982). As is characteristic of particles, in the absence of surrounding words that provide the context for interpretation, these words by themselves do not carry significant semantic weight; instead, like many discourse markers (cf. Schiffrin, 1987), they serve to supplement speakers' nuances in their utterances.

There are a number of final particles used in Singapore, but I concentrate on the use of only *lah* [la], *leh* [le], *laeh* [læ], *law* [lɔ] or [lɒ], *hanh* [hã], and *haw* [hɔ] or [hɒ] or *hawnh* [hɔ̃] or [hɒ̃]. These particles were selected based on my impressionistic gauge of their prevalence among Singaporean speakers as well as extent of use among the Mainland speakers. Each of these particles can be optionally lengthened to provide emphatic effect. *Lah, leh, law, haw,* and *hanh* can also be used in colloquial Singaporean English, whereby, according to Gupta (Gupta, 1995, cited in James 2001), *lah, leh,* and *law*[36] indicate "speakers' commitment to what is said" or "mark a directive" while *haw*

[36] Gupta (1995) spelled *law*, *haw,* and *hanh* as 'lor', 'hor', and 'hah' respectively.

and *hanh* are "used to put forward an idea tentatively, or to mark a request" (p. 12). In my opinion as a native Singaporean speaker, Gupta's description of the final particles' functions in Singaporean English applies to Singaporean Mandarin as well. In the following paragraphs, as I introduce the final particles, I provide information on the range of particle usage among the expatriates by drawing on some of the speakers' practices as examples.

lah [la]

Probably the most commonly used particle among Singaporean speakers, *lah* can soften the tone of a directive, as in *wo jiao ni lah* 'I'll teach you PART-*lah*' (Grace speaking to a Singaporean coworker). It is also used in constructions such as *okay lah* (Jane on the phone with her Singaporean husband) to indicate concurrence with one's interlocutor or *no lah* (Shell conversing with her Singaporean coworkers) to reduce the possible brusqueness of disagreeing with one's interlocutor. Though there is not a particular word or phrase in English that is pragmatically identical to *lah*, the word *well* may come close to conveying a similar mitigating function of *lah*, as in *well, I'll teach you* or *well… okay* or *well…no*.

In Zhou's (2002) description of differences between Singaporean and Mainland Mandarin, he noted *lah* as used by Singaporean speakers differs slightly from that used in Mainland Mandarin. The primary difference is that in Mainland Mandarin, *lah* denotes the blending of two separate final particles *le* and *ah*, whereas the Singaporean usage of *lah* has a broader function. As shown by the parts in boldface in Example (53), *le* functions as a completive aspect particle (cf. (a)); when *le* occurs with *ah*, a question particle, as in (b), the overall particle *lah* conveys a question.

(53) Mainland Mandarin usage of *lah*

(a) zhe ge bu neng chi **le**
this Class.[37] Neg. able eat **PART/ASP**[38]
'this (thing) cannot be eaten.'

(b) zhe ge bu neng chi **lah [=le + ah]**?
This Class. Neg. able eat **PART/ASP + Question PART**
'this (thing) cannot be eaten?'

(Chao, 1968, p. 657; gloss mine)

Lah in the Mainland Mandarin sense is also used by Singaporeans, but according to Zhou, the use of *lah* in declarative sentences, usually to mark affirmation, prevails in Singaporean usage. Of the particles examined in this study, *lah* was most commonly used among the expatriates. Additionally, most of the speakers used *lah* in the non-Mainland Mandarin sense only. Yan's statement in (54) below is an example of *lah* being used in a manner similar to that of the locals. The sentence not only shows that *lah* was used in a declarative sentence, but also demonstrates that *lah* cannot be the same as *lah* [=*le* + *ah*], given that *le* was already present, as shown in the highlighted part.

(54) Ya= Yan, female, late twenties, from Sichuan (SC)
((talking with Singaporean taxi driver))
Ya: as long a- t- ca- can send me home jiu ke yi le ***lah***.[39]
[I'm] fine as long as [you] can take me home PART/ASP **PART-*lah***.

Yan's overall range of particle usage consisted of the frequent use of *lah* and *law*.[40] A Southern speaker, Yan displayed the use of the Singaporean sense of *lah*, as exemplified in Example (54) above, in addition to the Mainland sense in her conversation with a local taxi driver (which was mainly in Mandarin with occasional intra-sentential

[37] Class.= Classifier; Neg.=Negation

[38] I follow Li's (Y.-h. A. Li, 1990) glossing convention for the particle *le*. Where *le* occurs immediately after a verb, it is glossed as an aspect (ASP); where *le* occurs in sentence-final position, it is glossed as a particle. In cases where *le* occurs after a verb and also in sentence-final position, she glosses *le* as both PART and ASP.

[39] Segments of discourse in English are underlined.

[40] Unless stated otherwise, the speakers' self-recorded discourses discussed herein were in Mandarin.

codeswitching into English) as well as in her long-distance phone conversation with her mother and sister. In her one-on-one interviews with me and in conversations with her Singaporean coworkers, in which she engaged in more frequent alternations between English and Mandarin, not only did the frequency of *lah* usage correspondingly increase, but she also used only the local sense of *lah*.

Only two other speakers, Ying and Jane, engaged in the use of both Singaporean and Mainland senses of *lah*. The two Northern speakers both used *lah* in the Mainland sense only when speaking with their families in China. In contexts involving other Mainland Chinese in Singapore or in interviews with me, Ying used both senses of *lah* while Jane used it in the Singaporean sense only. Granted, most of the occurrences of the local *lah* in Jane's discourses occurred while she was speaking English, given that she had recorded herself speaking Singaporean English with her Singaporean husband and with Mainland Chinese students she was mentoring, her phone conversation in Mandarin with her mother being the only exception. Hence, although Yan, Jane, and Ying used both senses of *lah*, they nonetheless showed variability with respect to the contexts and frequencies of use of either of the meanings.

leh [le], ***laeh*** [læ], and ***law*** [lɔ] or [lɒ]

Leh, *laeh* and *law* are used in declarative sentences to mark speakers' stances towards their statements. These particles are used colloquially in Singaporean discourse and, to my knowledge do not correspond to final particles in Mainland Mandarin. In (55) Yilin's use of *leh* conveys more than just the fact that someone's daughter was young; it conveys Yilin's views about *how young* that person's daughter was. In other words, *leh* complements with *hai* 'still' (in bold) to indicate degree of youthfulness. In (56) *laeh* signals Grace's conviction about little children being unable to tolerate road trips. *Law,* as

used in Example (57), marks the speaker's view as personalized and thus, revealing the speaker's remark as more than just an objective statement.

(55) YL= Yilin, female, mid-thirties, from Guangdong (SC)
((talking with a Singaporean coworker))
YL: nu er **hai** hen xiao ***leh***

[her] daughter is still very young **PART-*leh***.

(56) G= Grace, female, mid-thirties, from Beijing (NC)
((talking with a Southern Chinese coworker))
G: xiao hai zi shou bu liao de ***laeh***

little children will not be able to tolerate it **PART-*laeh***

(57) WL= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC)
((during my one-on-one interview with him))
WL: wo hui jin liang (rang) ta ting dong ***law***

I will try my best to (make) him understand **PART-*law***

In the statements above the use of the final particles turned otherwise general statements into ones reflecting the speakers' personal views. The two particles below differ slightly from the other particles in that they connote a slightly greater degree of tentativeness.

hanh [hã] and ***haw*** [hɔ] or [hɒ] or ***hawnh*** [hɔ̃] or [hɒ̃]

Hanh and *haw* (or *hawnh*) are often used in Singaporean discourse to transform declarative statements into interrogatives. Speakers can use them to seek confirmation, as in Example (58). In 'standard' varieties of Mandarin, including Singaporean Mandarin, *zhe yang zi* literally means 'this manner'. A question meaning 'is that so?' would be said, "*shi zhe yang zi ma?*" where *shi*, the copula 'to be', along with the interrogative particle *ma* would be used. Alternatively, the copula may be absent, as in "*zhe yang zi ah?*," where *ah* signals a question; *hanh*, as used in (58), thus functions as *ah*, turning the

declarative statement into a question. However, *hanh* is not used in 'standard' Mainland Mandarin.

(58) Jane's use of *hanh*
J= Jane, female, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)
J: o:h, z-yang zi ***hanh***?

o:h, is that so **PART-*hanh***?

In very informal discourse, Singaporean speakers often use the particle on its own, as in "*hanh?,"* to request repetition of what was said just prior or to indicate disbelief. It is noteworthy that although this particle may have a Mainland counterpart, [ã] (Qing Zhang, personal communication, March 7, 2007), a number of the expatriates such as Grace, Charles, Chan, William, Gillian, Yan, and Yilin predominantly used the local particle. Even speakers who did not exhibit much use of local final particles such as Lyn, Rubin, Julia, and Laura displayed the use of "*hanh?*" rather than the Mainland counterpart during my participant observations of their interactions with Singaporeans or other Chinese expatriates.

Hanh and *hawnh* can also convey a slight degree of hedging, sometimes acting as a way to sustain interlocutors' interest in the ongoing discussion. For instance, in Example (59) *hawnh* functions as an alternative to a pause, a cue, as it were, for more to be said following the utterance of the particle.

(59) Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)
((on the phone with son living in China))
Y: wo shi jue de ***hawnh,*** wo men zai xin -a po de yi ge zhi ze ((neural tone)) jiu shi jiao shou biao zhun de hua yu.

'I feel part-hawh, our duty in Singapore is to impart [to students] standard, accurate hua yu [=Mandarin].'

7.1.1 Range of speaker variability in the use of final particles

In my analysis of the frequency of particle usage among the Chinese speakers, I noted the number of occurrences of final particles in three-to-five minute recordings of the speakers' discourses across various contexts. I classified the occurrence of one to two particles as "infrequent," three to four as "occasional," five to eight as "frequent," and greater than eight as "very frequent." The frequencies for each category label were determined by counting the number of final particles used in all the self-recorded conversations of three speakers who exhibited the highest, lowest, and in-between rates of final particle use. These speakers were selected based on my impressionistic gauge of their overall use of final particles in my interactions with them as well as in interviews and self-recordings. For each speaker's self-recorded discourse, I calculated the average number of final particles used in each three-to-five minute chunk of discourse.

Given that the final particles used locally in Singapore were linked to Southern Chinese languages such as Hokkien and Cantonese, I had anticipated that the particles would be used to a higher degree among the Southern than the Northern speakers. It was indeed the case that a greater percentage of the Southern speakers used the local final particles as compared to the Northern speakers. However, as a general trend, the Northern speakers who did use the particles tended to use a range of the particles and in frequencies comparable to those from Southern speakers, if not exceeding them. On the other hand, the Southern speakers generally used just one or two specific particles consistently and frequently.

Particle usage among the Southern speakers

Most of the eleven Southern speakers used the final particles at least "occasionally," hence showing a fairly moderate frequency of particle usage. The

practices of four particular speakers from Hokkien- or Cantonese-speaking regions in China, Chan, Yilin, Shell, and Dabaicai, were noted in particular. Since their linguistic backgrounds were most similar to that of the locals, they might also have had access to the same final particles as Singaporeans and thus were predicted to exhibit higher degrees of use than the other Chinese speakers in the study.

Chan's, Shell's, and Dabaicai's use of final particles was, however, not any more exceptional than that of the other Southern speakers. Yilin frequently used almost all the particles in different contexts ranging from conversations with Singaporean coworkers, Mainland Chinese coworkers, her daughter, and in my interviews of her, therefore suggesting that the use of final particles was a part of her linguistic practice in China and also in Singapore. Indeed, in her metalinguistic commentary of differences between her language use in China and Singapore, she reported that other than incorporating English words into Mandarin, she had not noticed other differences in her linguistic practices.

Like Yilin, Yan also used most of the local particles, showing frequencies of use ranging from "occasional" to "very frequent" with Singaporean interlocutors. However, unlike Yilin, Yan noted her use of local particles as a new practice in Singapore, as shown in (60) below, thereby indicating that final particle usage was not part of her linguistic practice prior to living in Singapore. Her infrequent use of the particles with her family in China and her Mainland Chinese boyfriend in Singapore seemed to confirm her metalinguistic report; the distinction in frequency of particle use between discourses with Singaporean and Mainland Chinese speakers thus suggested that for the most part, Yan had maintained her Mainland Mandarin practices with her Mainland Chinese friends and loved ones, having adopted a local practice involving the use of final particles mainly with Singaporean speakers.

(60) Ya= Yan, female, late twenties, from Sichuan (SC)

Y: …hui, er qie hui yong hen duo yu zu ((zhu)) ci se ((shen)) me ***la:h***

…[I will use words with local linguistic flavors], and I will even use a lot of 'helping words' **PART-*lah***

Other than exhibiting occasional or frequent use of a particular particle in just one or two contexts, Chan, Shell, Dabaicai, along with Xiaobo, Dan, and Li Chen hardly used other particles at all in other contexts. Displaying even fewer occurrences of particles in their discourse were Gillian, Anna, and Julia. Most of the individuals in these two groups of speakers did not remark on their use of the particles as a departure from their linguistic repertoires in China, although some recognized the use of final particles as a linguistic practice among Singaporeans and had reported to have used a wider variety of the particles in Singapore. Recall that in Chapter 4 I presented an excerpt from Gillian's self-reported use of Singaporean language features (Example (17), p. 82). The findings of her actual degree of particle use certainly revealed that she was not as productive in particle usage as she had claimed. Gillian used *lah*, *law*, and *hanh* infrequently; at best, *law* was used occasionally during her one-on-one interviews with me. To sum up, most of the Southern speakers proved to be conservative in their use of final particles in that they did not actually engage in the use of a wide range or a high frequency of particles; of the two speakers who did, only Yan demonstrated a significant change to her language repertoire through the adoption of the local use of particles.

Particle usage among the Northern speakers

As many as nine of the ten Northern speakers used final particles, but one of the nine speakers, Lyn, rarely used them across different speech contexts. In my participant observations, Lyn used *lah* predominantly when speaking in English with her coworkers

as part of *yeah lah* 'yes' and *no lah* 'no', phrases used often by Singaporean speakers. The only speaker who used final particles even less often than Lyn, and hence was considered a non-user, was Sihui.

Even though Yilin and Yan displayed the greatest degree of particle use among all the Southern speakers, their particle usage was surpassed or matched by some of the Northern speakers such as Grace, Ying, and Wei, followed closely by Jane, William, Charles, and Rubin (in order of decreasing degree of particle use). The first three speakers used at least five of the six particles investigated; the particles were used frequently or even very frequently with Singaporean interlocutors and occasionally with interlocutors from China. Jane, Charles, and Rubin did not use as wide a range of particles as Grace, Ying, and Wei, but nonetheless exhibited degrees of use roughly comparable to some of the Southern speakers such as Chan, Shell, or Dabaicai.

Grace exhibited consistently high frequencies of particle usage, regardless of the linguistic backgrounds of her interlocutors. In Grace's metalinguistic discourse in (61) below, she cited her use of "exclamatory words or words added to sentence-endings" as indicative of her Mandarin repertoire having become localized. Her reason for adopting this local practice was a way in which she could blend in with the locals and thus avert the locals' attention to her different linguistic and cultural background.

(61) Using particles to divert attention from one's linguistic distinctiveness
G= Grace, female, mid-thirties, from Beijing (NC)

G: xi guan… yu yan zhong de yi xie, gan tan ci huo de ((zhe)) jia jin qu de yi xie, ci. ju vei ((wei)) de ci ah, yu- *ah*, ***lah***, mm she me:, *meh* ah zhi lei de, dou you yi xie le.

[I] usually [use]… exclamatory words in the [local] language(s) or words added to sentence-endings, [like] *ah* [PART], **PART-*lah***, mm like, ***meh*** [PART], etc., [I] do use some.

> zou chu qu ye bu xi wang bie ren, yi ting dao ni shuo hua jiu ma shang zhu yi dao ni shi yu zhong bu tong de yi ge ren…xi wang, bi jiao zi ran rong ru she hui=bu yuan yi bie ren zong shi, zhu yi dao zi ji…
>
> when [I] go out [I] don't wish for others, as soon as they hear you [using the 2nd person but actually referencing herself] speak, to notice immediately that you are different from everyone else …[I] hope, to integrate naturally into society=[I] don't want others to focus on, pay attention to me [being different]…

In Example (52) of this chapter, although Wei's metalinguistic assessment of final particle use in Singapore suggested his distance from the local practice, the frequency with which he actually used many of the final particles indicated a discrepancy between attitude and practice. However, he also pointed out that using final particles in his interactions in Singapore enabled him to assimilate to the local linguistic context. Wei's and Grace's adoption of the local practice thus appeared to stem from pragmatic concerns related to fitting in or at least being able to come across to the locals as not being too distinctive in their language use in Singapore.

Along the lines of portraying localness in their linguistic repertoires, a separate group made up of both Northern and Southern speakers, namely Gillian, William, Lyn, Jane, and Charles, may not have displayed high levels of particle usage in different speech contexts, but it should be noted that their particle usage occurred more often in English or codeswitched discourses than in Mandarin discourses. Particle usage in those types of discourses also tended to be prevalent in the linguistic practices of Singaporeans. Therefore, it is important not to dismiss these speakers' overall low-to-moderate levels of particle usage as suggestive of perhaps their non-affinity towards local language resources, but to consider why the favoring of particle usage when using Singaporean English, such as whether the use of final particles in concert with Singaporean English might have been linked with potential personal gains. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

In the next section, I investigate the speakers' alternating use of Mandarin and English in discourse before discussing the meanings of the speakers' adoption of local language practices. Later in this chapter, I will discuss how the speakers stood to profit by adopting the local linguistic practices, especially in light of the disparity with their ideologies about language use among the locals as discussed in Chapter 5.

7.2 MIXED USE OF MANDARIN AND ENGLISH

7.2.1 Terminologies

In this section, I explore the mixed use of different language varieties among the Chinese expatriates, given that the local linguistic context in which they were immersed involved the common practice of juxtaposing Mandarin and English within discourses or sentences. Different researchers have used the terms *code-mixing*, *mixed code* and *codeswitching* differently to refer to distinct properties in the use of two or more codes in conversation turns, speech exchanges, or interactions (cf. Auer, 1984a, 1984b, 1988a, 1988b; Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Gumperz, 1982; Muysken, 2000; Myers-Scotton, 1993b; Poplack, 1980, 1981; Poplack & Meechan, 1995, 1998). Certain analyses distinguished between code-mixing and codeswitching, whereby code-mixing entailed the insertion of words or phrases from one language into another and codeswitching involved actual alternations between languages or codes (cf. Muysken, 2000).

In my analysis, I use *codeswitching* to refer to alternations of languages between sentences (inter-sentential codeswitching) or between fragments within sentences (intra-sentential codeswitching). I reserve the use of 'mixing' or 'mixed' to refer to the broader meaning of the use of resources from different languages or varieties. In other words, the

'mixed use of languages or language varieties' broadly refers to the various ways in which features, words, phrases, or sentences of one language are incorporated by speakers into another language.

I use the label *lexical embedding* (henceforth, embedding) to refer to the occurrence of single words or short phrases of one language occurring in discourse usually dominant in a different language, known as the *matrix* language (cf. Myers-Scotton, 1993b). I treat *lexical substitution*, defined as "the use of single lexical items of one language in discourse in the other language" (Kamwangamalu & Lee, 1991, p. 252), as the primary form of embedding in the practices of Chinese Singaporeans. Unlike *borrowing*, another type of embedding which entails the adaptation of single lexical items into the linguistic structure of the recipient language (cf. Poplack & Sankoff, 1984; Poplack *et al.*, 1988), lexical substitutions retain their original morphological and phonological features. In addition, while lexical substitutions are functionally akin to *established loanwords* in that they are diffused across a wide variety of speakers, they do not replace and eradicate words with corresponding meanings in the native language of the speakers the way that established loanwords sometimes take on new shades of meaning or very specific ones.

The mixed use of Mandarin and English among Chinese Singaporeans ranges along a continuum from the embedding of single words to switching languages between sentence fragments or sentences. The degrees of mixing vary from speaker to speaker. Generally speaking, Singaporean speakers who often codeswitch intra- or inter-sententially also engage in the embedding of single words, whereas speakers who predominantly embed single words from one language into another may not necessarily engage in codeswitching.

Given the range of practices exhibited among the Singaporean speakers, it was not surprising that Mainland Chinese speakers displayed a similar range of mixed bilingual practices. The Chinese speakers whose practices included codeswitching also frequently used embeddings; however, the number of speakers was limited to just six (viz. Jane, Yan, Shell, Charles, William, and Lyn). The greater proportion of the Mainland speakers was skewed towards engaging solely in the embedding of single words from English into Mandarin discourses. Within this group, speakers were sub-divided according to whether the embedded words were 'regular borrowings'[41] (i.e. terms used in day-to-day interactions) or specific kinds of borrowings (i.e. discourse markers). For nine of the speakers in this group, the only type of embedding was the use of English discourse markers in Mandarin discourses. The remaining six speakers engaged in the use of both everyday borrowings and discourse markers. Hence, a majority of the Chinese expatriates in this study did not actually engage in the full range of mixed language practices in the data collected; in fact, slightly less than one-half of the group showed a very limited range by using English discourse markers only. Below, I present data of the speakers' use of codeswitching and embedding of regular borrowings versus discourse markers. I follow with an analysis of the social meanings indexed by the different patterns in the mixed use of language resources.

[41] In contrast to 'nonce-borrowings' which tend to occur infrequently and are often integrated into the phonology or morphology of the recipient language (Poplack & Sankoff, 1984; Poplack *et al.*, 1988), 'regular borrowings', as used in this dissertation, may or may not reflect the phonology or morphology of Mandarin and are widely used by the speakers as well as the local community. As well, I operationalize 'regular borrowings' as having no nuanced connotation in Mandarin. For example, my participants sometimes used the English word *email* in their Mandarin discourse, even though there is a Mandarin equivalent, *dianyou* 'electronic mail'. To my knowledge, *email* does not connote a more restricted or specific meaning than *dianyou*.

7.2.2 Codeswitching

Construction of solidarity

During a lunch conversation occurring predominantly in Mandarin prior to the excerpt in Example (62), Yan initiated a codeswitch in line 2 following her Singaporean coworker's remark in Mandarin. Yan's utterance, which started with and ended in English spoken with a Singaporean accent, involved an intra-sentential switch into Mandarin and triggered a shift from Mandarin to English being used as the matrix language of the subsequent turns in lines 3-10. Just as the codeswitched instance in line 2 triggered a change in the language of the discourse, another instance in line 11, again initiated by Yan, triggered another change, this time back to Mandarin. Yan's use of *rice* and *pants* in lines 2 and 11 respectively in place of everyday Mandarin words thus exemplified lexical substitution.

(62) Lunch conversation between Yan and Singaporean coworkers
Ya= Yan, female, late twenties, from Sichuan (SC)
CF2, CF3= Chinese Singaporeans; females; coworker of Yan's.
CM= Chinese Singaporean; male; coworker of Yan's.

1 CF2: okay, ru (he), ru guo ni mai 'meesua' gei wo jiu ci law.

'okay, if, if you buy *meesua* [a type of noodles] for me, I'll eat them.'

2 Ya: I thought ni suo ((shuo)) ni bu xihuan chi rice.

'I thought you said you don't like to eat rice.'

3 CF2: I don't like to eat 'beehoon', yes correct,//but I thought-
4 Ya: //but this is not.
5 CM: ( )
6 CM2: there's a few there. ( ) umbrella right? y'can grab the green one.
7 Ya: the rain is very heavy.
8 CF3: yeah, //you can cover-
9 Ya: //umbrella is no use.
10 CF3: no, it has use up to a certain exte:n,//you know?

11 Ya: //ni kan wo de pan(t)s,

//'look at my pants,'

12 quan bu si dao le.

'[they're] completely wet.'

Prior to the above excerpt, Yan's coworker had expressed slight disappointment that Yan had bought her a different type of noodles than what she had requested. In Yan's turn in line 2, her response, an attempt to defend her actions, suggested a change in footing in that a shift from a normal conversational frame to one of addressing a perceived complaint had occurred (Goffman, 1967, 1974, 1981). Hence, from a conversational analytical perspective, Yan's use of English fragments in line 2 introduced a change to the language of the discourse and thus helped to mark the change in footing.

In line 11, Yan's switch into Mandarin occurred in conjunction with a change from discussing about the heavy rain outside to drawing attention to her having gotten wet while she was out getting take-out lunch for everyone. Her changing the language of discourse from English back into Mandarin thus contributed to a subtle change in topic focus. The roles of Yan's interlocutors thus changed from that of 'fellow commentators on the weather' to that of 'audience'. The fact that her Singaporean coworkers responded to her codeswitching in line 2 by changing the language of their discourse from Mandarin to English also signaled their acceptance of her codeswitch as normative for that context. Their linguistic response thus suggested their acquiescence to Yan's role as a legitimate initiator of changes in footing rather than just an outsider or a passive participant in the social dynamics within that group of locals.

Yan had proven to be a very competent English speaker in my observations of her interactions with her Singaporean coworkers and with sales assistants in retail stores. Her English vocabulary certainly extended far beyond the use of basic words such as *pants*

and *rice*. It was not the case that she used those English words due to lexical gap or retrieval errors for words corresponding in Mandarin. The mixed use of English and Mandarin is a typical practice during lunch-table conversations among Chinese Singaporeans, when conversations tended to steer from official, business-related subjects usually communicated in English to informal discussions of everyday topics. Particularly within the context of multinational companies, of which Yan was an employee and where local and non-local varieties of English are used among employees of various nationalities, the use of codeswitching among the local speakers signals solidarity among locals working in the "de-localized" work environment. Therefore, Yan's use of codeswitching at the lunch-table indicated her display of solidarity with—rather than distance from—the Chinese Singaporeans with whom she worked.

Displaying habituated local linguistic behavior through use of local linguistic emblems

As already pointed out in this and other chapters, Jane's self-reported preferred language to use in Singapore was Singaporean English. Her recorded conversations in Mandarin primarily occurred when she was speaking with Mainland Chinese interlocutors. The excerpt below displays the only self-recorded context in which Jane had used Mandarin with a Singaporean interlocutor. Even though the primary language of the discourse was Mandarin, Jane used English discourse markers for back-channeling and also frequently engaged in intra-sentential codeswitching throughout her conversation with a Singaporean taxi driver.

(63) Jane's conversation with a Singaporean taxi driver
J= Jane, female, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)
D= Chinese Singaporean, male, taxi driver.

1 J: kai, kai taxi ye si ((shi)) hen lei *haw?*

'taxi-driving can be tiring PART?'

2 D: mm. si jian bi jiao, xian zai yao bi jiao chang lah, zui sao ni yi tian yao zhuo si er ge xiao si.

'mm. The hours are more, longer these days particle, at the very least you have to work twelve hours a day.'

3 J: *u:h,* dui, yin wei //ni-

'((in agreement)) yes, because// you-'

4 D: //qian mian liu ge xiao si, si, bu si ni de *lah.* ba ge xiao si ye bu si ni de *lah.*

'The first six hours are, are, aren't yours PART [with regard to making a profit]. The first eight hours are not yours either PART.'

5 J: *ah?* wei se mo *ne?*

'Ah? Why?'

6 D: ni yao jiao ze ge// wu, eh, jiao ze ge: taxi fèi *mah.*

'You have to pay this//uh, pay the rental fee for this taxi PART.'

7 J: //o:h, o:h, oh, okay.

8 D: //hao xiang yiu fei mah, parking// ah, se mo lah, dui bu dui?

'//[pay for things like] gas particle, [and] parking//particle, [and] all kinds of things particle, right?'

9 J: //oh, **then**- //o:h- o:h, oh, oh, oh, okay.

10 D: dui mah? //*hanh.*

'Right? PART ((reinforces his point with 'hanh.'))'

11 J: //ni, ni jiao si ((shi)) jiao ji ge xiao si ((shi)) de fēi. I mean, ta de nei ge //taxi fee.

//you, you pay, you pay how many hours of [rental] fees. I mean, the taxi's taxi fee.

…

12 J: **yeah *law*** parking uh-unh.

'**Yeah PART**, parking uh-hnh.'

13 D: *hanh*, suoyi wo, suan dao lai yi tian dagai yao baier kuai.

'that's why I, added together, it's about 120 dollars per day.'

14 J: jiao sang-qu ((shang qu))*lah*, **then** the rest cai si ((shi)) ni zi ji de *lah*.

'[that's how much] you pay, **then** the rest that's how much [money] you earn for yourself.'

In Example (63) above Jane used the word *taxi* frequently instead of the *Putonghua* label *chu zhu che* 'rentable car'; *dishi,* the Mainland Mandarin transliterated loanword from English (Hu, 2004; H. Sun & Jiang, 2000); or *deshi*, the Singaporean Mandarin transliterated form. Just as this lexical substitution was also used by the taxi driver, the driver's use of *parking* in line 8 was later echoed by Jane in line 23. The shared use of these lexical substitutions between Jane and the taxi driver demonstrated the degree to which both speakers were familiar and comfortable with the mixed use of Mandarin and English in that context, and hence able to build on each other's use of those particular words.

In the above excerpt, Jane's repeated use of minimal responses like *oh* and *okay* (highlighted by the dotted underlines) in lines 7 and 9 provided evidence that particles like *haw, law*, and *lah* were not the only local discourse features used. With the phrases *yeah law* in line 23 and *then* (in the phrase *then the rest* in line 25), Jane tapped into two pervasive discourse markers which are highly emblematic of Singaporean discourse. She demonstrated that her linguistic behavior was heavily influenced by, if not already quite similar to, the local discursive practices.

The phrase *yeah law*, which means 'yeah', is essentially part English and part Chinese in origin and is widely used among Singaporeans to indicate agreement or confirmation. In most varieties of English, *then* is used as part of a conditional pair consisting of *if/then* or as a marker of a temporal sequence of events (Schiffrin, 1987). In local discourse, particularly Mandarin discourse such as Jane's in this example, *then* also signals successive occurrence of events, but with a greater emphasis on marking consequence. *Then* and its variant, *and then*, are used not only in English but also in Mandarin discourse. The discourse marker *and then* has been noted by Kamwangamalu and Lee (1991) as "commonly used out of convenience or as a matter of practice" (p.254) in local codeswitching discourse in which the matrix language is Mandarin.

In reference to linguistic anthropological analyses of linguistic features as indexical of social distinctions (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004b; Gal & Irvine, 1995; Irvine & Gal, 2000; Silverstein, 1996), the use of *then* in Singaporean Mandarin discourses is iconized by proficient Mandarin speakers in Singapore as 'broken' Mandarin spoken by *ang moh kia* 'red-haired kids'. The label 'red-haired kids' draws on the prototypical image of Caucasians as redheads and refers to Chinese Singaporeans who are viewed as influenced by the 'West' and who are perceived as speaking better English than Mandarin.

As discussed in Chapter 5, Jane had constructed distance from the locals' use of Mandarin; her constructed language identity as such was not that of a 'broken Mandarin speaker'. Yet in the above discourse, her use of *then* and *yeah law* along with the use of other local discursive features all pointed to her linguistic alignment with her interlocutor. Given this apparent disparity between her constructed language ideology and actual language use, I propose that the use of these local resources indexed other social

meanings or functions for Jane instead of the negative association with speakers of 'broken Mandarin'. Jane had successfully used discursive features which were emblematic of Singaporean discourse, thereby mirroring the linguistic practices of a large percentage of Singaporeans. However, I argue that the local meanings associated with the use of certain discursive features were not necessarily salient to, or adopted, by her. I will elaborate on this point later in this chapter, following my description below of the mixed-language practices of other speakers.

One of the most interesting characteristics of Jane's codeswitching data was her use of the Chinese word *fei* 'fee' in Line 11, which was first used by the taxi driver in Line 6, as in *taxi fèi* 'taxi fee'. Barring a slight vocalic difference, *fei* sounds like and shares the same meaning as the English word 'fee'. Although the Mandarin pronunciation bears a high falling tone, as in [fèi], in line 11, Jane pronounced the word with a high level tone, as in [fēi], which closely approximates the pronunciation of *fee* [fi]. As soon as Jane had said *fei* with the incorrect tone, however, she quickly performed repair by stating that she meant to say *fee*. The vocalic difference was in fact so subtle that had Jane not corrected herself, I expect that the uttered word would have been accepted as either the English word itself or a lexical substitution for it.

The fact that linguistic features from different languages seemed to have been simultaneously encoded in this instance is reminiscent of *hybrid* linguistic forms arising through contact between English and an urban variety of Bemba known as Town Bemba (Spitulnik, 1998). The hybrid forms, consisting of overlap between English and Town Bemba phonology and morphology, are somewhat ambiguous in terms of whether they are assimilated loan words or codeswitches when used by speakers. Although the co-occurrence of features from two different languages has been theorized as plausible under

the structural constraints of *congruent lexicalization* (Muysken, 2000), it was Gardner-Chloros (1995) who claimed that suprasegmental features overlapping between two languages in codeswitches can bear significance for the revelation of a composite of identities indexed by the features. She argued that "we should consider the possibility that speakers can simply let down the mental barriers between the two languages at various different levels—for example, switching can take place at the phonological level only—rather than assuming that they constantly shift from one pre-set frame to another" (p. 71).

Woolard (1987, 1999) has also suggested that bivalent codeswitching involving the simultaneous yet subtle use of overlapping features from two languages can reveal ideologies concerning the strategic choice of languages. The similarities between 'fēi' and 'fee' in Line 11 could thus have been suggestive of a simultaneous appropriation of English and Mandarin, such that both languages were associated with the same word. Being bivalent, that is, being able to convey social meanings linked with potentially opposing languages yet not indicative of exclusively one language or the other, the word thus served as a neutral point of transition from one language to the other.

Another instance of a possible bivalent use of English and Mandarin features, though not occurring as a codeswitched word, can be seen in Example (25) in Chapter 5 (repeated as Example (64) below), where Jane had commented on Singaporeans' language use as "superficial."

(64) Jane's pronunciation of 'Singaporean'

J: general [*sic*] speakin- this uh Singapo:**ren**

Jane's reference to Singaporeans required plural marking, given that she was making a generalization, but her pronunciation of the word *Singaporean* exhibited the absence of the plural marker. As plural marking is not used in Mandarin, it could be the

case that Jane was following the Mandarin grammatical structure. It could also be that as a speaker of English as a foreign language, she was not consistent with her use of plural marking. More importantly, Jane had used a non-standard pronunciation, pronouncing Singaporean as [sɪŋ.gə.pɔ.**rən**]. Barring the absence of tone, Jane's pronunciation of [-**rən**] was identical to the Mandarin pronunciation of *xin jia po* ***ren*** **[rən]** 'lit: Singapore person', where *ren* refers to 'person'. In this case, Jane did not correct her pronunciation. This example was thus suggestive of the possible overlapping of the English and Mandarin morphemes denoting 'person'. Although there were just a few of such examples in Jane's discourse, nonetheless, the occurrence of pronunciations approximating both English *and* Mandarin phonology was indicative of Jane's ability to simultaneously tap into both language resources, which further suggested that Jane's competencies in both language varieties were high.

Use of words with strong local flavor (Idiomatic use)

Example (65) displays intersentential codeswitching between Charles and his Singaporean brother-in-law. Both of them were playing computer games in this self-recorded conversation. For the most part, the matrix language in this discourse was Mandarin. The excerpt below picks up where Charles made an inter-sentential codeswitch into English. In what appeared to resemble trash-talking Charles was either taunting or challenging his opponent, the brother-in-law, by asking a character in the game (presumably that played by his opponent) if he was up for the competition, that is, good enough to fight.

(65) 'Singlish' syntax in intersentential codeswitching
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties
B= Singaporean brother-in-law

1 Ch: okay *law*, ge da ge de *aw*.

'okay PART, let's compete against each other PART.'

2 Ch: ((addressing a character in the game)) you good or not, Ali, Ali?

3 B: ha?

4 Ch: are you okay or not?

5 B: aw, aw, aw ((making noise, as if competing)).

6 Ch: you don't play play *ah*.

The use of the structures *you good or not* and *are you okay or not* was reflective of a commonly used structural form consisting of '[adjective or verb] + or not' in informal Singaporean speech contexts. While most varieties of English, including Singaporean English, do use 'or not' following verbs or adjectives, the presence of a copula 'to be', as in *are you okay or not?* renders the utterance more grammatically acceptable than simply *you okay or not*. Charles' use of the phrases thus mirrored the use of Singlish via copula-dropping, a common feature in non-standardized Singaporean English (Gupta, 1998). On the other hand, the phrases could also have been translated directly from Mandarin, *ni xing bu xing* 'you okay not okay' or 'you able not able'. Given similarities in the syntactic order of English and Mandarin, and also given that translated words from Mandarin into English are common in Singlish utterances, a Mandarin phrase like 'you okay not okay' thus closely resembles 'you okay or not'. By virtue of the fact that the phrase *good or not?* may be used to express doubt of someone's capabilities, Charles' implementation of the phrase thus enabled him to convey his undermining of his brother-in-law's ability to pose a challenge to his gaming prowess. Charles' use of

phrases of the paradigm '[adjective or verb] + or not' thus conveyed a local idiomatic meaning shared with Singaporean speakers.

In line 6, Charles used another idiomatic phrase in English, repeating the word *play* to create a phrase *don't play play*, meaning 'don't play around'. This phrase, made popular by a Singaporean comedian famous for his Singlish-speaking persona on a local television show, was widely circulated among Singaporeans during the height of the show's popularity. *Don't play play* was used endearingly by Singaporean children, to the point where the proliferated as well as celebrated use of Singlish was addressed in parliament and seen as detrimental to the acquisition of 'proper' English (Rubdy, 2001). Therefore, on the one hand, the phrase's use in everyday contexts raised the ire of a segment of the Singaporean population out of concern that a 'non-standard', hyper-colloquial form of English was being projected internationally as used by Singaporeans. On the other hand, the phrase was embraced by other Singaporeans as symbolic of the subversion of legitimized languages in the local media, which up till then had sanctioned the use of 'standard' English only.

Indeed, Charles' appropriation of *don't play play* reflected his reported affinity for the television character; his use of phrases like *okay or not* and other Singlish phrases from the show thus projected him as an avid emulator of the linguistic practices of the character. From my interview with Charles, which took place after he had made the audio recordings of himself, he reported his own linguistic practices as having been influenced by Chinese Singaporeans' frequent use of codeswitching and Singlish. However, while his use of the local idiomatic phrases signaled his ability to match what was an appropriate register to use in local speech contexts such as those involving familiar interlocutors, it is questionable whether the tension between the "official" stance of the

State and that of the masses on the use of these 'non-standard' phrases was salient to him. He was not yet living in Singapore when the parliamentary language debates sparked by this character's use of 'non-standard' English occurred. Nevertheless, recalling that Charles had evaluated Singaporeans' English abilities somewhat positively (cf. Example (41), Chapter 5), I propose that his favoring of the local idiomatic phrases was a step in the direction of aligning with the local variety of English. Hence, Charles' actual linguistic behavior indicated congruency with his metalinguistic stance towards Singaporeans' use of English.

7.2.3 Lexical embedding of single English words in Mandarin

While the above speakers displayed effective use of the local linguistic resources in ways that signaled the construction of identification with Singaporean speakers, other Mainland Chinese speakers showed more limited use of English in Mandarin discourses. I analyze the latter group as using only highly salient English discourse markers and everyday words, therefore, exhibiting far less depth than the first group of speakers: the second group of Mainland speakers embedded English words in their use of Mandarin primarily in ways that reflected the wholesale, idiomatic borrowing of commonly used local terms unlike the first group who displayed a greater propensity to use English words and form phrases or clauses that are not just stock borrowings. While it was not surprising that borrowings from English used by the second group of speakers applied to common everyday interactions with locals, it was interesting to observe English being incorporated into Mandarin in their conversations with interlocutors who are unfamiliar with linguistic practices in the Singaporean context.

Use of English discourse markers in Mandarin

The most common occurrence of English in Mandarin discourses as exhibited by the Chinese speakers was the use of English discourse markers, broadly operationalized as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (Schiffrin, 1987). As noted above, nine of the twenty-one speakers used English discourse markers as their only display of the mixed use of Mandarin and English. I analyze this group of nine speakers as generally more restricted in the functions of discourse markers used in relation to the other speakers. The English discourse markers used by the group comprising Chan, Gillian, Xiaobo, Sihui, Dan, Li Chen, Laura, Julia, and Rubin can be categorized as limited to occurring in backchannels or in discourse slots created by question-and-response adjacency pair-parts. As shown in Example (66) Chan's use of *yeah* and *okay* during a phone conversation with his friend in China exemplified the practice of most of the speakers in this group. Many tended to use discourse markers in slots typically filled by the equivalent of 'yes' in Mandarin to either agree with or confirm one's interlocutor's utterance in a prior adjacent pair-part.

(66) Use of *yeah* and *okay* in utterance openings
C= Chan, male, early thirties, from Fujian (SC)

((Chatting on the phone with a friend in China))

(a) yeah, y-you, you, you kong wo hui gei ta da-yi-da dianhua.

'Yeah, when [I'm] free I'll give him a phone call.'

(b) okay, hao na na wo men zai lian luo *law*.

'Okay, alright then then we'll be in touch soon PART.'

Given that the discourse markers used by the nine Chinese speakers tended to fill backchannel or response slots, the markers thus occurred in utterance openings. Furthermore, the markers did not serve other discursive functions such as leaving an

opening for comments or elaborations before closing a conversation, as described by Schegloff and Sacks (1973). On the other hand, the other speakers who engaged in codeswitching or even the embedding of other kinds of English words in Mandarin discourses tended to exploit a fuller range of functions of the discourse markers, as illustrated in Ying's use of various functions for *okay* in Example (67) below.

(67) Use of *okay* and *you know* in utterance closings
Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)

((Phone conversation with her pre-teen son who lived in China))
Y: *ah*, bu yao na me wan *lah*, jin tian lei le jiu shui okay?

'Ah, don't [stay up] so late PART, today, go to bed when you're tired okay?'

awh, okay, na ni deng yi xia=ni ba -en ((gen)) ni shuo hua, *awnh*?

'PART, okay, hang on a moment=your father wants to talk to you, PART?'

nnh, okay, deng yi xia, unnh?

'((minimal response)), okay, wait a moment, PART?'

okay, xing. ni guai guai xie zuo ye, uwnh, wan-hang [shang] bu yao xie tai wan ah, you know?

'Okay, will do. Do your homework, unh, don't work too late into the night, you know?'

In the above excerpt, Ying's use of *okay* incorporated both confirmatory and pre-closing functions described in the previous paragraphs. In particular, in giving routine advice to her son, Ying's use of *okay* and *you know* in the first and last turns in this conversation served to draw her son's attention to her counsel. This function of *okay* and *you know* was similar to Schiffrin's (1987) analysis of *y'know* as an invitation of hearer's attention. Drawing on the useful ability of discourse markers in monolingual English discourse to demarcate boundaries between conversational actions and to change frames in discourse (Goffman, 1974, 1981; Schiffrin, 1987), I analyze Ying's use of English

discourse markers in this particular discourse as a resourceful way of adding an authoritative frame to the discourse through the use of Singaporean English, which was less familiar to her son than Mandarin. Ying's use of resources from a language more familiar to her than her son helped set up an imbalance of power which was skewed in her favor. Thus, the embedding of the discourse markers enabled her to invite even more attention from her son as compared to the use of only one language, Mandarin, in the discourse.

The respective groups of Chinese speakers represented by Chan and Ying were thus analyzed as contrasting in the degrees to which a range of discourse marking functions was applied. I argue that the group represented by Chan mainly applied the confirmatory discourse markers as a form of ritualized response in the context of adjacency pairs or backchannels. On the other hand, the other speakers, although also displaying use of ritual functions, had greater ability to create meanings in discourse or construct personas through the use of English discourse markers in their Mandarin discourses.

Lexical substitution from English into Mandarin

Kamwangamalu and Lee (1991) analyzed the use of English nouns in Chinese[42] as a widespread norm in the linguistic repertoires of Chinese Singaporeans. Despite this trend, only slightly more than half of the Chinese speakers (12 out of 21) engaged in this practice. The type of English words which these speakers tended to substitute in Mandarin discourse was those commonly used in the workplace. Most of the speakers

[42] Though Kamwangamalu and Lee's (1991) research focused on intrasentential codeswitching between English and Mandarin, their study included codeswitching examples between English and Hokkien and English and Teochew as well. Thus, I use *Chinese* rather than Mandarin as a label for the various Chinese languages.

explained that workplace English words were particularly salient to them because the workplace was where they had the greatest amount of interactions with Singaporeans, through whom they picked up English work-related vocabulary.

Example (68) illustrates the lexical substitution of an everyday work-related English word in a conversation taking place in Mandarin between Wei and his former coworker from China, who was at the Singapore office where Wei worked for a short work visit. In this example, the two speakers used *office* in place of *ban gong shi*, its Mandarin equivalent.

(68) Wei's borrowing of work-related terms with differentiated word stress.
W= Wei, male, late twenties, from Inner Mongolia (NC)
C= former coworker of Wei's visiting from China

1 W: (-an) hai you, na zhong, zai of'fice' de li mian.
'And there's, those who work in the office.' ((where word stress is more or less equal on both syllables))

2 C: of'fice de ren nei-an d-ao.
'How many people in the office?' ((where word stress is on first syllable))

Wei's use of an English word in this instance was not unexpected given that he had a tendency to use lexical substitutions of English words in his conversations with Singaporean fast food restaurant workers, his friend Shell (a fellow Mainland Chinese speaker who also participated in this study), and me. Having been in Singapore for only a year at the time of the study, Wei described his proficiency in English as poor and was seeking to find language schools to help him improve. He reported that he used predominantly Mandarin in almost all his conversations with Singaporeans; finding even conversational English to be a struggle for him, he used English only with interlocutors who did not speak Mandarin. Nonetheless, his regular use of English lexical substitutions suggested that he had adopted the local practice of incorporating resources from both

Mandarin and English in the short time that he had been living in Singapore. In the above example it is noteworthy that Wei engaged in the use of lexical substitutions with a fellow Mainland Chinese speaker who was not familiar with the local linguistic practices. Wei's use of *office* in line 1 was followed by the use of the same word by his coworker, C, in the next line. However, important to note was the fact that the two speakers differed in their pronunciations of *office*.

Wei's pronunciation exhibited phonological characteristics of Singaporean English, whereas C's pronunciation patterned more closely with that of American or British varieties of English. The main difference between Wei's and C's pronunciation of the word was in the placement of word stress. C's Mandarin-accented pronunciation[43] of the word bore primary stress on the first syllable, whereas Wei's pronunciation reflected the syllable-timed prosody related to the distinctive realization of stress in Singaporean English, wherein disyllabic words typically sound as if either equal stress is placed on both syllables or more emphasis is placed on the second syllable.[44] Simply put, Wei's pronunciation of *office* in line 1 would have been treated as an unmarked pronunciation by Singaporean speakers, whereas C's pronunciation would have been considered marked. In light of the fact that Wei's use of Singaporean English word stress lent a local quality to his utterance, I analyze speakers' tapping into Singaporean English

[43] I characterize Mandarin-accented English as constituting Mandarin tonal qualities, whereas Singaporean-accented English tends not to have the same kind of tonal quality.

[44] Stress patterns in Singaporean English seem to favor lengthening of phrase-final nuclei as well as having the F0 of an unstressed nucleus be nearly indistinct from—or approximate—that of a preceding stressed nucleus. A huge decrease from the F0 of stressed to unstressed nuclei is what gives British English (and possibly by extension, other varieties of English) the characteristic stress prosody. The lack of an F0 distinction between stressed and following unstressed nuclei in Singaporean English is thus perceived as stress being "transmitted" over to unstressed syllables (Low & Grabe, 1999).

phonological resources as demonstrating that the successful mixed use of local language resources was contingent on the degree to which suprasegmental features of the local language varieties were adopted by the speakers.

In the following example, I show that lexical substitution of English words in Mandarin discourse, while resembling local linguistic practices, constituted a pronunciation of an English word which would have been considered marked to a Singaporean speaker. In Example (69) William was talking with a Singaporean taxi driver about news of a Chinese oil company's financial losses, which made headlines in the local papers. The English word *million* was repeatedly used by William, pronounced as [milin] in each occurrence.

(69) Use of "accented" English words in lexical substitution
WL= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC)
T= Chinese Singaporean taxi driver

1 WL: shu le jiu, da-ai ((gai)) jiu ge ***milin***.
'Lost about nine ***million***.'

2 T: ooh xia si ren ah.
'ooh that's really scary.'

3 WL: jiu ge ***milin***. jiu ge ***milin*** shi ta de nei ge,
'Nine ***million***. Nine ***million*** is its,'

4 three times of, of its annual, annual profit.

William's pronunciation of *million* with a high, front, tense vowel [i] in both syllables deviated from the normal pronunciation, which uses a high, front, lax vowel [ɪ] and a diphthong in the first and second syllables respectively. Furthermore, in the above disyllabic word, a high tone was heard on the second syllable. In Mandarin all tone-bearing syllables are stressed (Duanmu, 1990, 2002, 2005); thus the high tone on the second syllable resulted in the perception of that syllable as stressed as well. By contrast,

adjacent syllables in English do not bear equal stress. Therefore, the adjacency of a high pitch associated with the stressed first syllable in *million* and the high tone on the second syllable resulted in unusual tone and stress placement, thus rendering an accent that was not characteristic of Singaporean English.

Although the use of non-Singaporean English phonological features projected a slight departure from the local linguistic behaviors, I draw attention to the fact that William's English pronunciations were not always unique-sounding like his pronunciation of *million* above. Other recorded data of William's conversations with other Mainland Chinese speakers, Singaporean coworkers, and me displayed his frequent use of final particles and also intra- and inter-sentential codeswitching. The frequent use of a variety of Singaporean linguistic practices suggested his overall tendency to converge to the local linguistic practices. Thus, I analyze his occasional use of non-Singaporean English features as a reflection of the inevitable fact that he was a non-native speaker of Singaporean English.

7.2.4 English competency and the use of mixed, local language resources

To be sure, almost all the speakers used non-Singaporean English features at one point or another in their self-recordings, interviews, or during my participant observations of their everyday interactions. The above examples highlighted the fact that the Chinese speakers in the study were at different stages in their learning of English as a foreign language. Speakers' prior exposure to other varieties of English before their arrival in Singapore might also have influenced their use of English features other than those of Singaporean English. Given that the speakers' backgrounds in English constituted a range of competencies, it was thus not unexpected that different speakers exhibited different degrees of variability in their use of local and non-local pronunciations of English words.

Wei, Ying, Chan, Xiaobo, Sihui, Dan, Li Chen, Laura, Julia, and Rubin, who self-reported as having low proficiencies in English, demonstrated the highest degrees of variation between Singaporean and non-Singaporean English pronunciations. With the exception of Wei and Ying, the speakers constituted a group of speakers whose only use of English in Mandarin discourse was discourse markers. Generally, the other speakers demonstrated less variability in their use of local versus non-local phonology. These speakers also had greater tendencies to use codeswitching and other forms of embedding. In particular, of all the speakers, Jane, Yan, and Shell used the mixed language resources the most frequently and exhibited the least variability in pronunciation, using predominantly local phonology. With these three speakers, any variation from normal Singaporean English pronunciations was more subtle, an example of which was Jane's use of overlapping phonological features from Mandarin and English as shown in Example (64) above.

7.3 WHAT IS AT STAKE? MEANINGS OF THE USE OF FINAL PARTICLES AND MIXED LANGUAGE RESOURCES

As presented in Chapter 5, I have shown that a majority of the speakers constructed Singaporean English and Mandarin as less "standard" than the native varieties they spoke or had learned prior to living in Singapore. As an example of a common ideological distancing from the local language varieties, Julia had claimed that the languages used in Singapore "did not sound good" (*bu hao ting*) and did not come across as "standard" varieties to her. She also expressed a desire to learn "better [sounding] language." Julia's assessment was echoed by others' similar characterizations of Singaporeans' language proficiencies as "not native" and "lacking depth."

The fact that most of the speakers engaged in the use of the local language resources in spite of their disalignment from the local use of Singaporean English and Mandarin showed an apparent disparity between their language ideologies and actual practices. Further, many of the speakers' reports of their degrees of engagement in the local practices almost always matched their actual practices. Therefore, I seek to answer the question, "what reasons could explain the contradiction between the speakers' ideologies and practice, both actual and reported?" In thinking about a possible answer to that question, I was led to two other questions: "what did the Chinese speakers stand to gain from the use of the local language resources?" and "could the speakers' use of the local language resources possibly be non-contradictory to their language ideologies?"

I seek to answer the first question by looking to answer the second and third questions first. To answer the second question, one would only need to refer to examples of speakers' self-reported language choices and use, as presented in Chapter 4. For example, Gillian had found the use of local utterance-final particles acceptable for use in conversations with Singaporeans; Charles defaulted to speaking the local variety of English with unfamiliar Singaporeans; and Jane preferred Singaporean English over Mandarin in her everyday conversations in Singapore. Similar stances were projected by these speakers, in which the use of final particles and Singaporean English served the purpose of reducing communicative barriers with Singaporean speakers. The use of English in public in interactions with strangers, in particular, was a means for some of the female speakers to assert their competencies in the local linguistic behaviors. By doing so, they were able to distinguish themselves from other Mainland Chinese women in Singapore ostracized in Singaporean society for their participation in illicit sexual activities, whose language repertoires often consisted of Mainland Mandarin only.

Furthermore, as a majority of the speakers valued English as an avenue to better career prospects, both in Singapore and worldwide, the motive that some of the speakers had expressed to me regarding their move to Singapore was to take the first step in experiencing international living while immersing themselves in a linguistic context in which to better their English skills. The pervasive use of mixed language resources among Singaporeans also allowed speakers in the earlier stages of English-learning such as Sihui, Ying, Xiaobo, Laura, Dan, Li Chen, Julia, Chan, Rubin, and Wei to improve their English proficiencies. Sihui, for instance, cited the local linguistic context, which did not put absolute stress on the monolingual use of English, as conducive for her to use English words even though she considered her English vocabulary to be very limited. Other self-professed "poor" speakers of English also noted their ability to use English in Mandarin discourse as a way of practicing newly learned English vocabulary, thereby allowing them to ease into the use of unfamiliar English words.

Hence, to answer the second question, from a pragmatic point of view, the Chinese speakers who had lived in Singapore for a period of time and had acquired knowledge of the local linguistic norms stood to gain socially from the use of local resources by deflecting unsolicited attention or hostile treatment from Singaporeans as well as projecting distance from undesirable traits associated with some other Mainland Chinese in Singapore. Additionally, from a functional perspective, the Chinese speakers found value in learning English in Singapore. Speakers who reportedly lacked competency in English found the use of mixed language resources in the local linguistic context particularly beneficial to their learning of English.

All in all, the Chinese speakers' use of English in Singapore could only add to, rather than subtract from, their local cultural capital, since they recognized that English

was the most commonly used currency there. As Bourdieu (1991) explained, speakers consider the quantities of linguistic capital that they possess and attempt to increase the quantities of that capital and use it in ways that they expect to gain profit in terms of how their language use is "received and valued by others" (p. 19) in that linguistic market. Coming back to an earlier observation about speakers' greater levels of particle usage in English discourse as compared to Mandarin discourse, I suggest that the use of final particles was tied in with Singaporean English as a way to increase the quantities of their local linguistic capital. The use of the local final particles in English discourse thus constituted two locally valued linguistic currencies, whereas the use of the particles in Mandarin discourse only constituted one local currency (that of the final particles), given that many of the speakers' Mainland Mandarin accents did not count towards their local capital. As such, while the use of final particles in Mandarin discourse allowed the Chinese speakers to gain some profit by adding local qualities to their discourses with Singaporeans, I argue that the use of English and final particles together enabled them to secure *maximal* profit, that is, to be viewed as adept and experienced participants in the local linguistic market and simultaneously not just as tourists or other Mainland Chinese whose language use typically only consisted of Mainland Mandarin.

7.3.1 Semiotic processes of linguistic differentiation

So far, I have addressed what the speakers stood to gain from the use of the local language resources. I now address the third question by exploring the possibility that the meanings constructed by the Chinese speakers about the use of Singaporean language resources might have stemmed from the functional purposes listed above. I propose that the Chinese speakers' attitudes about the local varieties of English and Mandarin and the linguistic practices of Chinese Singaporeans as examined in Chapter 5 remained intact,

but that those attitudes had stemmed from ideologies based on their non-Singaporean (or non-local) language experiences. At the level of their local language experience, however, their attitudes towards the local linguistic practices were primarily informed by *functional purposes* of the use of the local resources that were ultimately advantageous to them. To this end, I suggest that most of the speakers adopted—and adapted—the language ideologies held by Singaporean speakers; at the same time, they did not relinquish their non-local ideologies. I argue that the speakers' local and non-local language ideologies likewise converged in a way that their local ideologies in fact reinforced, rather than contradicted, the non-local ideologies.

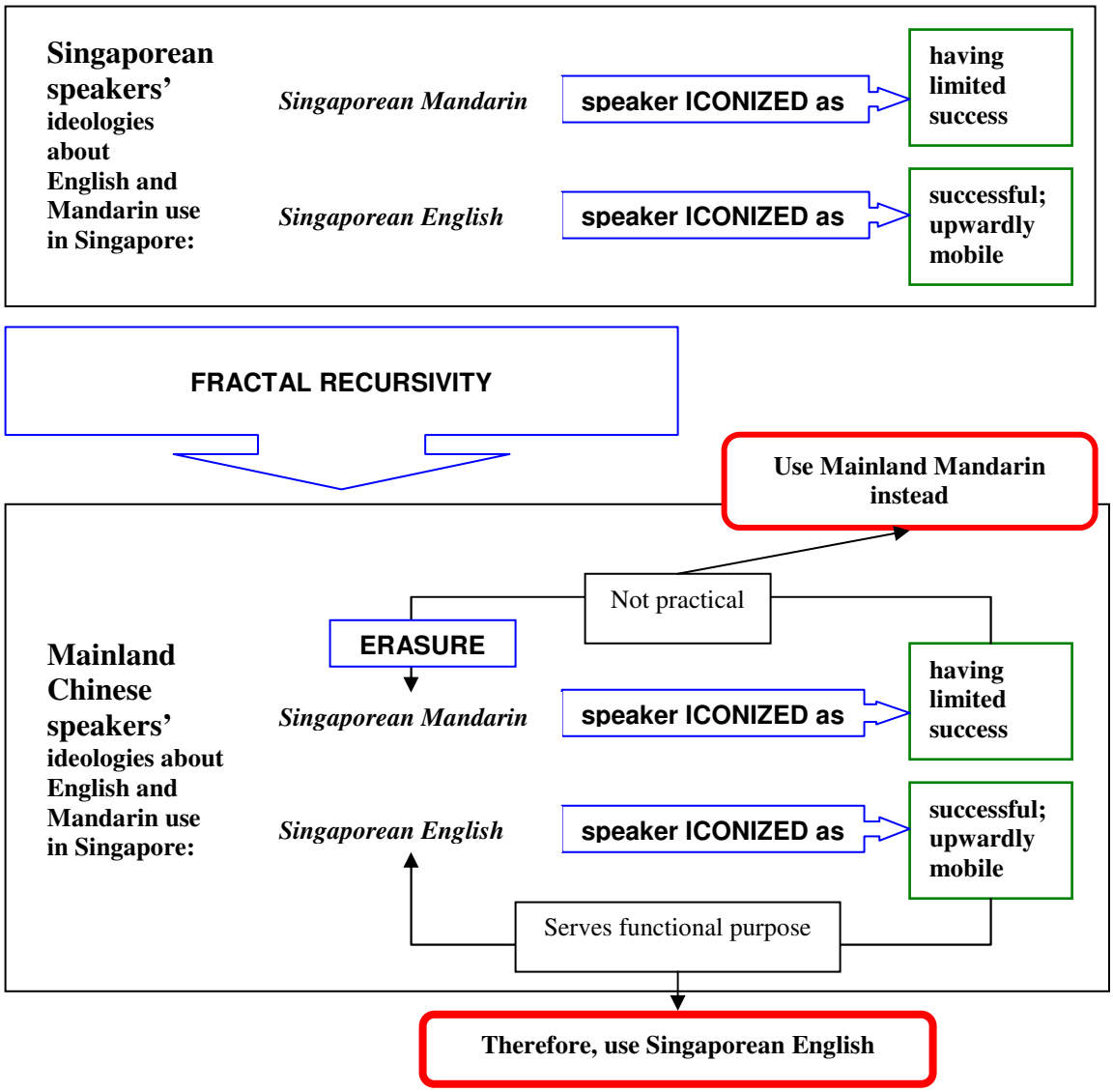
Drawing on Irvine and Gal's (2000) semiotic processes of indexicality, I explore the relationship between the values assigned by the Chinese speakers with respect to the local language varieties and Singapore's State-sanctioned ideologies about Mandarin and English. Singapore's State ideology emphasizes the role of English (at the expense of other local languages, such as Mandarin) because of its practical value as an international language. The State's valorization of English over Mandarin has been projected onto the local speakers, which has come to link English with speakers having greater upward mobility than speakers who are dominant in Mandarin. Hence, Mandarin speakers in Singapore are often deemed less successful because of job limitations caused by a general bias towards English competency in almost all professions.

In the local linguistic context, iconization, that is, the "transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic features (or varieties) and the social images with which they are linked" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 37), involved the linking of local language varieties to perceptions of success. The opposition between the use of English and Mandarin among Singaporeans, in turn, was projected onto Mainland Chinese speakers

through *fractal recursivity*, that is, "the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" (p. 37). These speakers not only shared the locally held ideologies about the use of Singaporean English and Mandarin, but they also projected the locally held positive valorization of English and its perceived success onto their own language use in the local linguistic context. At the same time, they also judged the use of Singaporean Mandarin as not useful to them for the projection of an upwardly mobile image. Recall that Singaporean Mandarin had already been constructed by the speakers as not up to par with their native varieties. Hence, with Singaporean Mandarin being constructed within the local linguistic context as not being able to serve a practical function, Singaporean Mandarin was thus rendered even more insignificant—through the process of *erasure*—by the Chinese speakers.

A schematic representation of the semiotic processes involved in the speakers' differentiation of the local varieties of Mandarin and English is found in Figure 7-1 below. In the representation of Mainland Chinese speakers' ideologies, the social characteristics indexed by the use of each language variety provided further feedback to the speakers, thus enabling the speakers to make further evaluations along the lines of whether the languages served any functional purposes. As shown in the curved, rectangular boxes, the end result of the ideological differentiation of the two language varieties was that of the speakers selecting the use of Singaporean English. On the other hand, Mainland Mandarin continued to be used by the speakers since Singaporean Mandarin on its own played an overall insignificant role in terms of its social meaning among Singaporean speakers, and an even less significant role for the Chinese speakers.

Figure 7-1: Schematic representation of ideological differentiation of Singaporean language varieties and speakers



I suggest that the use of English to some extent in the form of codeswitching and embeddings, even if only sporadically, signaled the fact that the speakers' were not just monolingual Mandarin speakers, given that in Singapore the erasure of Mandarin—and Mandarin speakers—was imminent, if not already set in motion among the current generations of Chinese Singaporeans who have grown up or are growing up speaking English as the household language (Pakir, 1999; Singapore Department of Statistics, 2001). Thus, the use of mixed local language resources was a linguistically and socially profitable strategy used by the Chinese expatriates to both communicate with Singaporean speakers using local linguistic norms and to project their social standings as at least on par with other Singaporean speakers.

As I hope to have shown, the local language ideologies projected by the Chinese speakers had resulted in most of them retaining the use of their regional varieties of Mandarin. I have argued that the speakers' adherence to their native Mandarin varieties conveyed a contestation of the value of Singaporean Mandarin. Thus, the speakers' non-local ideologies indicating their resistance towards the use of Singaporean Mandarin was further reinforced by the local ideologies. The convergence of ideologies on the two distinct levels was rather like Le Page & Tabouret-Keller's (1985) notion of *focus*, used as a trope through which to view distinct linguistic ideologies as being able to come together to bring about coherency in social meaning. Therefore, as the two sets of ideologies about Singaporean Mandarin overlapped, the Chinese speakers' antipathy towards the local variety became even more salient.

Returning to the use of final particles, I propose that focusing was also involved. Although the use of those particles was part of a Singaporean linguistic practice, at least some of the particles were claimed by the Chinese speakers, as well as documented in the

literature, as being traceable to Mainland Chinese origins. It was quite possible that many of the speakers adopted this particular local practice because of its perceived similarities with particles used in China. Because the Chinese speakers frequently engaged in the use of final particles, it is probable that many of the speakers projected similarities between locally used final particles and ones used in Mainland Chinese regional dialects and Mandarin varieties onto their use in the Singaporean context. Singaporean final particles might have been constructed as auxiliary to those used in various dialects or Mandarin varieties in Mainland China. While certain Southern speakers spoke regional dialects that included the use of final particles similar to the ones used in Singapore, many of them, especially the Northern speakers, did not necessarily have similar particles in their native dialects. However, given their perception of Singaporean particles as similar to those used in China, the speakers could construct their use of the Singaporean particles as an extension of Mainland Mandarin particle use.

The Northern speakers, having less regional knowledge of the nuanced differences, if any, in the final particles used in Singapore and in Southern regions of China, might have used Singaporean particles to a greater extent in comparison to Southern speakers because they might have perceived their use of the particles as drawing on wider Mainland language resources. On the other hand, to many of the Southern speakers, the particles might have had social meanings that were significant to them at some level specific to their native regions. The Southern speakers were perhaps more likely than the Northern speakers to be aware of different levels of local social meanings that could be indicated through their use of Singaporean particles. Nonetheless, the ideological projection of Singaporean final particles as auxiliary to Mainland Chinese particles—it did not matter that they tended to be used predominantly in Southern

Mainland varieties of Mandarin—would indicate that the speakers were firmly oriented to China. Through this analysis of the focusing of Singaporean linguistic practices and ideologies onto those of Mainland China, I hope to have demonstrated that the speakers maintained transnational ties to their homeland through their negotiation of local and non-local meanings associated with the local language resources.

7.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the ways in which Chinese expatriates in Singapore engaged in the use of local language resources were examined. Their engagement in the local linguistic practices was analyzed in terms of their knowledge of local meanings of language use within the Singaporean speech community, as well as their own language ideologies, which I referred to as 'non-local' ideologies.

In answer to the question "what reasons could explain the contradiction between the speakers' ideologies and practice, both actual and reported?" the contradiction did not apply to the speakers' use of and ideologies about the local Mandarin variety. With regard to Singaporean English, speakers indeed articulated a harsh stance towards the variety while appearing to engage in the use of it, thus conveying a certain degree of contradiction between ideology and practice. I seek to explore this tension in ideology and actual behavior in the following discussion chapter, which addresses the overall patterns that had been observed of the Chinese speakers' use of both Mainland Mandarin and Singaporean language resources.

Chapter 8: The use of Mainland Chinese and Singaporean language resources in the authentication of Mainland Chinese identities

As I have shown in Chapter 6, the local linguistic behaviors of the speakers in this study ranged from a high usage rate of Mainland Mandarin phonological features with limited engagement in Singaporean linguistic practices to a low percentage of Mainland Mandarin features coupled with high usage rate of Singaporean features. In the case of most speakers, their local linguistic behaviors, that is, patterns of language use in the context of their lives—personal and professional—in Singapore, consisted of the use of language resources from both Mainland China and Singapore. In Chapter 7, I argued that the use of local language resources among the Chinese speakers was largely mediated by their ideologies about language use in China and Singapore.

In this chapter, I examine differences in the range of linguistic behaviors as exhibited among selected speakers and use those examples to explore generally what it means for speakers to variably use local (i.e. Singaporean) and non-local (i.e. Mainland Chinese) resources across the different speech contexts. Additionally, I address ways in which consistencies as well as inconsistenties between ideologies and practice come to play a crucial role in shaping the speakers' local identities.

Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall's (2004b, 2005) theorizing of identity as relationally constructed, I outline how the Chinese speakers in this study exhibited their identification with and dis-identification from Chinese Singaporeans via different axes of relationality. I demonstrate that the speakers' linguistic relationship with Chinese Singaporeans and Singaporean language varieties and practices are concomitantly mediated by their non-local ideologies drawn from their transnational linguistic ties to Mainland China.

8.1 SPEAKERS' LINGUISTIC BEHAVIORS

A composite of the speakers' degrees of use of the language resources examined in this study is shown in Figure 8-1 below. The local linguistic behaviors of the Northern and Southern speakers are represented in two separate tables, in terms of relative frequencies of occurrences of rhotacization, neutral tones, and final particles, or whether the mixed language resources used by each speaker consisted of discourse markers, lexical embeddings, or codeswitching. These patterns of behaviors tell us, first, about the speakers' practices—how they deploy resources at their disposal and, second, and more indirectly, about those resources themselves.

Within each regional group, speakers have been located along a continuum based on their language behaviors. The language behaviors of the speakers were ranked implicationally as best as possible such that the rankings reflect the combinatorial ranking of speakers with respect to other speakers as well as to each linguistic feature or practice: from highest to lowest frequencies in the use of Mainland Mandarin features, from lowest to highest frequencies of use of final particles, and from most limited to least limited use of mixed language resources.

As indicated by the direction of the arrow, speakers who exhibited overall high frequencies of use of the *Putonghua* features based on Beijing Mandarin (i.e. Northern Mainland features) and low levels (including limited use of mixed language resources) of use of Singaporean resources were ranked closer to the left, while those who showed the converse pattern in their use of Mainland Mandarin and Singaporean resources were ranked closer to the right. As such, speakers on the rightmost end of the continuum displayed higher degrees of convergence towards the local linguistic norms than those on the other end.

Figure 8-1: Range of speakers' linguistic behaviors

Northern speakers' use of language resources		Group 1 High frequency of use of Mainland Mandarin; limited use of Singaporean resources					Group 2 Mid-level use of Mainland Mandarin; mid-high level of use of local resources			Group 3 Limited use of Mainland Mandarin; high level of use of Singaporean resources	
		Sihui	**Rubin**	**Lyn**	**Laura**	**Ying**	**Wei**	**Charles**	**William**	**Grace**	**Jane**
Northern Mandarin resources	**Rhotacization** (Usage frequency*)	High	Mid	Mid	Low	High	Mid	Mid	Mid	Low	None
	Neutral tone (Usage frequency)	Very high	Very high	Very High	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Singaporean resources	**Final particles** (Usage frequency)	Very low	Low	Very low	Very low	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	Very high	High
	Use of Mandarin and English in discourse (Type of mixed resources+)	DM	DM	All	DM	DM+LE	DM+LE	All	All	DM+LE	All

Mainland Mandarin norms ⟶ **Singaporean linguistic norms**

Southern speakers' use of language resources		Group 4 Generally limited use of Mainland Mandarin; limited use of Singaporean resources							Group 5 Limited use of Mainland Mandarin; high level of use of Singaporean resources			
		Anna	**Julia**	**Gillian**	**Li Chen**	**Dan**	**Xiaobo**	**Chan**	**Yilin**	**Dabaicai**	**Yan**	**Shell**
Northern Mandarin resources	**Rhotacization** (Usage frequency)	Mid	Very low	Very low	Very low	Very low	Very low	Low	Very low	Very low	Mid	Low
	Neutral tone (Usage frequency)	Mid	Very low	Very low	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Singaporean resources	**Final particles** (Usage frequency)	Low	Low	Low	Mid	Mid	Mid	Mid	High	High	High	High
	Use of Mandarin and English in discourse (Type of mixed resources)	DM+LE	DM	DM	DM	DM	DM	DM	DM+LE	DM+LE	All	All

* The labels 'High', 'Mid, and 'Low' etc. denote speakers' usage frequencies in relation to other speakers.

\+ Type of mixed resources: DM= Discourse markers only; DM+LE= Discourse markers and lexical embedding; All= use of codeswitching, lexical embedding, and discourse markers

As delineated by the thick, vertical lines, I have further subcategorized the speakers according to degrees of convergence to Singaporean linguistic norms. A description for each group (on the top row of each table) summarizes patterns in the linguistic behaviors of the speakers in each group. Beginning with the groups on the left end of the continuum, the majority of speakers (five Northern speakers in Group 1 and seven Southern speakers in Group 4) exhibited the lowest degree of convergence to Singaporean norms. The frequencies of use of final particles among these speakers were generally low; as well, the use of English in Mandarin discourse was mostly limited to the utilization of discourse markers.

There were, of course, exceptions to this general pattern, such as Ying and Anna, who both used English lexical embeddings in addition to discourse markers, and Lyn, who used all three types of mixed language resources. Although these three speakers used a wider range of English resources in Mandarin discourses than other speakers in Groups 1 and 4, they did not engage in the practice of codeswitching or lexical embedding as often as the speakers in those groups. Nonetheless, these three speakers were grouped together with the other speakers in Groups 1 and 4 due to their relatively low usage rates of local resources and high usage rates for at least one of the non-local resources. Speakers from Groups 1 and 4 differed in that those in Group 1 were from Northern China and tended to use the highest levels of Northern Mainland Mandarin features, while the Southern speakers in Group 4—as well as most of the other Southern speakers—exhibited lower levels of those features.

On the other end of the continuum, the speakers in Groups 3 and 5 (two Northern and four Southern speakers) displayed limited use of the Mainland Mandarin features while at the same time, used Singaporean features extensively. These two groups of

speakers actually overlapped in their linguistic behaviors, with Grace patterning closely with Yilin and Dabaicai and Jane patterning with Yan and Shell. As for the speakers in Group 2, on the one hand, the use of local linguistic resources among Wei, Charles and William patterned with the practices of those in Groups 3 and 5; on the other hand, their use of Mainland Mandarin features reflected more similarities with those of speakers in Groups 1 and 4. These speakers' abilities to use both local and non-local resources at relatively extensive levels thus point to their linguistic flexibility, a point I will address later in this chapter.

8.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINGUISTIC BEHAVIORS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAMENESS VERSUS DISTINCTION: SOME CASE STUDIES

Below, using a number of speakers who were either exemplary of or distinct from the speakers in the groups in which they were categorized, I discuss the extent to which the speakers' use of the different regional language resources conveyed their construction of local or non-local identities. The speakers to be discussed and their corresponding results are highlighted by the shaded areas in Figure 8-1.

The fact that a large number of speakers displayed relatively low usage rates for the local linguistic resources leads to a question: To what extent did speakers view the use of local language resources as necessary for their local communicative practices? I propose that for many of the speakers in Groups 1 and 4, local language resources were not used and were not thought of as needed for the speakers' construction of local identities, because in most cases, the Chinese speakers wished to convey difference from Singaporeans. I discuss below how Sihui and Ying, apart from being from an older age group when they first arrived in Singapore, distinguished themselves from Singaporeans.

8.2.1 Revisiting 'age at arrival' in view of speakers' linguistic ideologies

At first glance, in the case of Sihui and Ying in Group 1 and Li Chen and Dan in Group 4, speakers' age at arrival, a factor noted as significant in the Varbrul statistical analysis of speakers' use of rhotacization, may have influenced their high levels of Northern Mandarin usage. Proponents of linguistic stability have proposed that speakers tend to use established features of their language varieties as they get older, thus becoming relatively stable in their language use and being less subject to linguistic changes as they age (Chambers, 2003). The earliest dialect surveys also targeted *non-mobile, older, (predominantly) rural males* (*NORMs*) as this type of speakers purportedly used more stable, non-innovative features or styles than highly mobile, non-native, young, urban, or female speakers (Chambers, 1992; Chambers & Trudgill, 1998). While an older age at arrival may indeed have influenced Sihui, Ying, Dan, and Li Chen's limited use of local linguistic features, I argue that speakers' beliefs about their age being a limiting factor in their use of newer linguistic resources is more worthy of investigation than just age as a social category.

In Sihui's case, it appears that her high frequencies of Northern Mandarin use signaled a certain degree of 'linguistic stability' associated with age. In (70) below, Sihui explained her use of language as being deeply entrenched because of her age. Using the idiom *gen shen di gu* 'deep-rooted' to express her being so firmly grounded in the use of her native language variety that she could not be influenced to use language any other way, she claimed that it would be extremely awkward for her to change her speaking habits.

(70) Sihui citing age as a deterrent to her use of local language resources
Si= Sihui, female, late forties, from Tianjin (NC)

Si: ni xiang wo, nian ling da. unh, hen duo yu yan jiu zai wo zhe yi jing **gen shen di gu** le.
…
ni rang wo gai bian. wo ye hen bie zui. jiang –i ((qi)) lai hen bie zui. bu ru bao liu zi ji de dong xi.

'Like me, I'm older. Unh, my use of languages is ***root deep*****[=deep-rooted; irreversible]** within me.'
…
'If I were to change, I would be very awkward. It would be awkward to speak [a different variety]. I would rather preserve my own [way of speaking].'

Sihui's argument that she was not able to change her use of Mandarin was in fact contradicted by her own remarks elsewhere in the interview that her friends and family in China had noticed a change in her spoken Mandarin. According to Sihui, they had noted that her pitch patterns had gone up by an octave "*gao ba du le*" and had classified her linguistic behaviors as "non-Mainland Chinese," which she automatically assumed meant 'Singaporean'. Given that Sihui had been told repeatedly that her linguistic behaviors had undergone modifications, I argue that she was highlighting the irreversibility of *gen shen di gu* 'deep-rooted', identifying with the notion of not being able to change her linguistic practices while minimizing the fact that her linguistic practices had indeed undergone change. This dis-identification with change in linguistic practices therefore suggests that Sihui did not find positive value in adapting her linguistic practices to local norms; in fact, her friends' critiques of her use of non-Mainland features may have even contributed to her distancing herself from the use of local linguistic features. Hence, although Sihui might have cited her age as a factor in her "inability to change" the way she spoke Mandarin, I suggest that it was the property of irreversibility (of linguistic practices) linked with "age" on which she capitalized to reclaim her identity as a Mainland Chinese

speaker (so as to "prove" to her Mainland Chinese friends and family that she was still able to speak like them).

In general, speakers' ideologies provide richness of information about the social meanings associated with their linguistic practices which simple social categories like class, race, and age cannot. Labov's (1972b) Martha's Vineyard study had demonstrated that older speakers were not always the ones to resist linguistic change but that younger speakers may also retain the use of the native linguistic features depending on their propensity to identify as long-term natives of the island. Labov's analysis correlated the use of raised, central diphthongs with speakers' reported intentions to stay on in Martha's Vineyard. Although the analysis did point to the fact that speakers' reported life goals, which were not necessarily about language per se, could ultimately be related to their language use, an in-depth investigation into speakers' ideologies of language use could have rendered a deeper understanding of *why* the use (or non-use) of certain linguistic features was important. Drawing on the significant role of speakers' language ideologies, I demonstrate that Ying's use of higher frequencies of non-local features was likely linked with linguistic *security*, a notion that, at one level, may tie in with age being a mitigating factor in one having established linguistic stability in one's language variety; at another level, it encompasses speakers' attitudes towards their own and others' language varieties and practices.

Ying' comments about whether or not the use of Mandarin features should change as a speaker changes from one linguistic context to another were telling with respect to her preference to continue using features of her native Mandarin variety in spite of her expressed interest in staying on for a long period of time in Singapore. It is noteworthy that she had framed her long-term plans just ambivalently enough by stating that she

anticipated working in Singapore for as long as she possibly could (until retirement in a little over twenty years), while expressing that she did not want to live there permanently. Ying's hedging with respect to the idea of spending the remainder of her life in Singapore was extremely indicative of her reluctance to identify with Singapore, even though she might ultimately actually spend more continuous time in Singapore than she would in China in her retirement and even though in twenty years, she might actually have become more habituated to living in Singapore than in China. Ying's metalinguistic comment reflect her ideological *othering* (Duszak, 2002) of Singapore; the self-other distinction was also projected onto the level of her stance towards Mainland Chinese and Singaporean language varieties.

As shown in Example (71) below, claiming her variety of *Putonghua* as 'very standard', Ying constructed Singaporean Mandarin as having very little symbolic value to her. Ying's use of mainly Mainland Mandarin features was reflective of her distanced stance with respect to using features of Singaporean Mandarin pronunciation. The convergence of practice and attitude seemed to stem from her view that her native Mandarin variety—which she reportedly considered 'standard'—was of greater linguistic value to her than other perceived 'non-standard' varieties, into which Singaporean Mandarin seemed to have been implicitly categorized.

(71) Ying's 'very standard' *Putonghua*
Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)

Y: …yin- wo xian-ai ((zai)) jiang de putonghua yi jing **hen chun zheng le**=wo mei you bi yao qu, uh, wei le yi xie yuan yin ah she me qu gai bian. mei you. dan shi you de shi-ou ((hou)) jiu shi wei le gen ren jia gou tong de fang bian, ke neng hui, ke neng hui uh, **shi ying ta de yi xie, yu yan biao da de xi guan.** dan shi wo jue de **wo mei you bi yao qu, qu gai bian wo ben shen de zhe-ong ((zhong)) fa yin.**

> '…because currently I speak **very standard** *Putonghua*=I do not have to, uh, change [my use of *Putonghua*] for any particular reason. No. However, occasionally for the sake of communicating with others, [I] may probably, probably uh, **accommodate their linguistic practices**. But **I feel I have no need to change my own pronunciation**.'

Although Ying did indicate that she occasionally "accommodated" the linguistic practices of Singaporeans, she expressed that she did not see a need to modify her pronunciation; thus, exhibiting a sort of *noblesse oblige*, by definition, patronizing from the perspective of, here, Singaporeans. Her portrayal of her native linguistic practices as though they were impervious to change was suggestive of her strong bias towards her 'standard' native variety. By contrast, "accommodation" of local linguistic practices was constructed as if it were an extra-linguistic phenomenon that could be easily be "turned on" or "off."

Ying's firm belief in the 'standardness' of her *Putonghua* coupled with her self-accorded license to continue using her native linguistic features indicated a sense of security in her Mandarin variety. I argue that this linguistic security was cultivated through her training to be a Mandarin teacher in China and further reinforced through her years of experience teaching Mandarin to Mainland Chinese students. She had explained that being a speaker of 'standard' *Putonghua* required a tremendous amount of hard work; in her training to become a Chinese language teacher she reportedly had to pass rigorous testing to prove her proficiency in 'standard' *Putonghua*. Hence, she viewed her having passed those tests as evidence of her ultimate achievement of the highest proficiency in *Putonghua*. In the subsequent years in which she taught Mandarin in China she also claimed to have upheld the "linguistic standard" required of her and also sought to impart her 'standard' of *Putonghua* use to her students in China and later in Singapore.

In the case of the other teachers, linguistic security was grounded in the perceived significance of the steps taken to achieve language proficiency. The other language

teachers in this study, namely Anna, Yilin, and Grace, had all indicated that their professional role in Singapore was to model 'standard' Mandarin to students, but only Anna expressed a similar sense of achievement as Ying in regard to passing difficult language exams, through which the status of 'standard' *Putonghua* speaker was attained. Anna and Ying's portrayal of their achievement of Mandarin proficiency as a form of self-actualization justifiably signified that they might cling on to their status as 'standard' speakers even more tenaciously than the other two speakers.

As we can see from Figure 8-1, as a Southern speaker, Anna's use of the Northern Mandarin features was slightly more extensive than that of the other Southern speakers. I suggest that Ying's and Anna's higher frequencies in their use of Northern Mandarin features in comparison to the other speakers in their respective cohorts was associated with a shared belief that their achieved proficiencies in Mandarin would render them less susceptible to changing their linguistic practices in the Singaporean context. Since Ying had been teaching continuously for over a decade in China and was in her mid-to-late thirties when she left for Singapore, I suggest that the years of teaching had helped to reinforce her linguistic security, thus, influencing her tendency to use a high level of Mainland Mandarin even in Singapore.

In the case of Grace and Yilin, ideologies of standardness were conveyed through their self-reports of their being adamant about correcting students' "ungrammatical" use of Mandarin in the classroom. However, these two teachers also expressed that they were aware that the perpetual embodiment of correctness might create a communicative rift between their Singaporean students and them and, thus, they did not see the need to be constantly "policing" their or their students' language use outside the classroom.

8.2.2 Problematizing 'convergence'

In contrast to Sihui and Ying, Jane, Shell, and Yan all used high levels of Singaporean linguistic features while using minimal levels of the Northern Mandarin features studied. Although these three speakers appeared to have mastered the use of local linguistic resources in a wide range of contexts and, thus seemed to have accommodated over the long term to the local linguistic norms, their reasons for their use of local Mandarin features were constituted in pluralistic views of the Mandarin varieties available to them: on the one hand, they wished to communicate better with Singaporeans through the use of local features; on the other hand, their engagements in local linguistic norms were constructed as tenuous, temporal strategies of communication, underneath which were far deeper transnational bonds to language practices in China. In brief, processes of differentiation may be embedded within speakers' accommodation, as it were, to local linguistic practices. Therefore, it is crucial to look at speakers' linguistic practices beyond just the level of convergence (or lack thereof) and to explore the ways in which distinctions were constructed between the speakers and the different language varieties or other speakers.

As shown in Examples (72)-(74), Jane, Shell, and Yan expressed similar reasons for their adoption of local linguistic practices, portraying their use of local language features as a practical means of avoiding being perceived as alienated or being discriminated against by locals.

(72) Identify with locals, but maintain own linguistic practices
J= Jane, female, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)
E= Er-Xin

J: I think ((/th/ fricates like [s])) for me is more, (2) um, (3.5) ((clears throat] **to pick up the language is more, um, y-know, is easy for you to adap- into the enviro-men-. and**

then[d] uh easy for you to, identified yourself with the res-. yeah. so: the [d] me-

E: ( )that presupposes that you want to identify yourself with the-

J: yeah. yeah. (1.8) but at the[d] same ti:me for me also **you cannot, um, y-know discard what you have? so you have must keep ((emphatic] what you have also**. your, know, your own language=so, and the same time you: try to adap- into the new envir-men- and learn that, that language. so is us-y ((usually)) for, people to, unh, for, u- you to, improve in that[d] envir-men-. Yeah.

In Example (72) Jane implied that her use of Singaporean language resources was for the purpose of adapting to the local environment. At the same time, however, in stating that one must not "discard" one's native language, she implied that her "convergence" to local language behaviors was more for a temporary purpose of relating to Singaporeans, but in the long term, she would always want to use her Mainland language resources.

(73) "Troublesome" to use a different variety
S= Shell, female, early thirties, from Guangdong (SC)

S: suo yi, 1.3) mm, su-i ((suo yi)) you de shi hou wo hui, pian xiang yong yi zhong, mm, dang di ren bi jiao neng gou xi guan de yi zhong yu yan de fang shi.
…
hao xiang wo jiang de, ying ((emphatic)) wen huo zhe, shi hua wen, ke neng hui geng jia de ben di te se hua. yin wei wo bu xi wang, na you de shi hou, ((clicks)) ni: ni jiang ni dang di de yi xie hao xiang hen zhong -uo ((guo)) shi de hua yu ne=dui yu ta men lai shuo, uh, (1) uh, dui yu wo zi ji lai shuo *ah*, **yin wei wo hui peng dao bu tong de fan ying suo yi wo jiu jue de hui, shi yi -e ((ge)) fei chang ma fan de shi qing**.

So, mm, so sometimes I will tend to use a type of, mm, a way of speaking that locals may find easier to accept.
…
like in my use of English ((emphasis)) or *huawen* [=Mandarin], [I] might make it more localized. Because I do not wish to, sometimes ((clicks)) when you use your own regional, like very Mainland Chinese type of *huayu* [=Mandarin]=as for them, uh, (1) uh, as for me *ah*, **because I have encountered different reactions, so I feel, [the use of Mainland Mandarin] is an extremely troublesome thing.**

In Example (73) Shell indicated that the less "troublesome" approach to communicating with locals was to speak in a way that locals might find "easier to accept," that is, so that she could avoid a range of different reactions which she had previously experienced when using Mainland Mandarin.

(74) Sensitivity to discrimination
Ya= Yan, female, late twenties, from Sichuan (SC)

Ya: ke neng yin- wo dai le n-o- ((na zhong)) uhn, wo dai -e ((le)) w- ((wo)) guo nei de na-ong ((zhong)) kou yin jiang hua de shi-ou ((hou)) ren-ia ((jia)) jiu hui jue de, um, "ni shi **WAI di ren**" zh-yang zi *ah* na, m, jiu hui bi jiao **pai c-** wo jue de=wo wo gan jue shang jue de ta m-n hui b- jiao ((bi jiao)) **pai ci**…

'Perhaps I spoke uh, when I spoke with a Mainland accent, people would think, um, "you're a **FOReigner**", so, m, [they] would tend to be **discriminate-** I felt=I I felt that they tended to be **discriminating**…'

…ren-ia ((jia)) ting bu dong ni ye jue de, ((clicks)) bu tai hao. yin wei, bi jing shi wei le jiao liu ma=ni ye xi wang ren-a ((jia)) ke yi ( ). jiu hao -ang ((xiang)) ni, wo jiu ju ge hen jian-an ((dan)) li zi=bi- ruo ((ru shuo)) wo m-n -ai ((zai)) zai, 'office li mian *ah*, yin-ei ((wei)) xian- da duo su ((shu)) hen duo xin -a po ren huo-e ((zhe)) ma lai xi ya ren *ah*, (duo-u) da-a ((jia)) dou jiang Singlish. ta tu ran jian lai yi ge ren, (-iu), m, si ((shi)) yi ge Chinese ke-i ((ke shi)) ta jiang yi kou cun ((chun)) zeng ((zheng)) de, m- mei guo shi ying yu huo -e ((zhe)) si ((shi)) ying guo shi ying yu. ran hou, office -e ((de)) ren jiu hui he-, jiu hui jiang shuo *aw*, "ni bu guo si ((shi)) yi ge ((clicks)), yi ge hua ren ((emphatic)) ( ) er qie ni ya-, ni hai z-yang *slan-* lai *slan-* qu" -e ta men jiu, huo xin li xiang shuo ah, uh **"ni bu yong gen wo xian si ((shi))**, w- wo mei you wo mei you ( ) ni ( ) ni bu yong gen wo xian si ((shi)) ni, ni hui jiang=ni b-yao yi wei wo, wo bu hui jiang z-yang zi"=ta men hui you ze-ong ((zhe zhong)) xiang, xin li hui you ze-ong ((zhe zhong)) xiang fa. **wo xiang xin ru guo yi ci lei tui de hua ni ru guo jiang, gen ta men bu yi yang de hua yu de hua, ta men ke neng ye hui you tong yang de xiang fa.**

'…[if] people don't understand [you], you will feel ((clicks)) not so good. Because, ultimately the point is to communicate=you hope that others can ( ). Just like, let me give a simple example=for instance we are at the office *ah*, because these days a lot of

> Singaporeans or Malaysians *ah*, everyone speaks Singlish. Suddenly someone comes in, mm, is Chinese but she speaks [to them] in fluent American or British English. The people in the office would then comment, "you are merely a ((clicks)), a *huaren* [=Chinese] ((emphatic)) ( ) and you, you are using slang ((meaning: accent))" or they would secretly think, uh "**you don't have to show off**, you, you can speak=don't think I, I can't speak [English]"=they will tend to have these thoughts. **I believe by extrapolating from this example that if you speak, a different [variety] from them, they will likely think that way about you**.'

While Shell's remark in (73) above obliquely suggested that some of those reactions from the locals might not have been complimentary to her and, hence, she might have preferred not to risk running into further encounters of that nature, Yan's comment in (74) directly addressed her perception of Singaporeans as often discriminating against non-Singaporeans based on language use. In painting a scenario in which a speaker using a different language variety from those used by the locals might be judged by Singaporeans as "showing off," Yan indicated that she did not want to draw that kind of negative attention to herself through the use of Mainland Mandarin; thus, she had elected to adopt local linguistic practices as a way to avoid discriminatory treatment from Singaporeans.

Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Gallois *et al.*, 2005; Giles *et al.*, 1977; Giles *et al.*, 1991; Giles & Powesland, 1975) analyze the modification of one's linguistic practice to match or resemble that of one's interlocutor(s) as convergence. The goals of convergence are usually to build solidarity or be positively received by one's interlocutors. In this respect, Jane, Yan, and Shell had all expressed their linguistic accommodation to Singaporean norms as generally stemming from a need to reduce social distance between the locals and them, so that they might appear to be less linguistically distinct from their Singaporean friends and coworkers. Their linguistic convergence to Singaporeans, as such, was rooted in local strategic goals.

Although in practice, their linguistic convergence to the local speakers was indicative of *adequation*, that is, the construction of sameness while leaving out (or minimalizing) dissimilar aspects (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004b, 2005), Jane, Shell, and Yan were well aware that they *were* linguistically distinct from Singaporean speakers and chose to remain distinct at a level separate from practice. Their divergence from the local speakers, especially with respect to Singaporean Mandarin, was constituted in distinctions in ideology, as seen in Examples (75)-(77). I argue that these speakers' ideological linguistic divergence was grounded in non-local standards of and for Mandarin use.

In (75) Jane implied that her native variety was "pure" and described the Mandarin variety which she used in Singapore as a "simple version." In signifying the difference between the two regional varieties in terms of an opposition, that is, 'simple' versus 'complex', Jane conveyed condescension towards Singaporean Mandarin and its speakers. Recalling that Jane's use of the Northern Mandarin features ranked as the lowest among the Northern speakers, we can now juxtapose the ideological condescension with her low usage rates for those features and conclude that in terms of Mandarin usage, Jane did not in fact engage in convergence to Singaporeans in the SAT or CAT senses of accommodation.

(75) "Simple version"
J= Jane, female, late twenties, from Shandong (NC)
E= Er-Xin

J: that[d], attitude towards you is, there's[d] no change. is, they don- understan-. **because if you use uh for me like, if I choose to speak in pure Mandarin, and the[d] words I use? some people do not understan-.**
E: m.

J: yeah. so I have to try to, use that language. simple? and then[d] the words they[d], use those[d] words that[d] they[d] frequ-ly use? so that[d] they[d] can, catch what I'm saying. yeah.

…

uh now is- t- y-know because now **I try to a- adap- to that [d] language so I still when I speak to -e the locals I still don- use, pure Mandarin?**

E: *unh*.

J: yeah. so, **I use simple [w]ersion.**

In (76) Shell, like Jane, also conveyed dialectal superiority by her linking of authenticity with her "original way of speaking" and further polarizing her use of Mandarin in China from that in Singapore. In (77) Yan demarcated her use of Mandarin in China and Singapore as non-overlapping practices, idealizing her ability to control the switching back and forth between both varieties.

(76) "Authentic"= "original way of speaking"
S= Shell, female, early thirties, from Guangdong (SC)
E= Er-Xin

S: mm, (1.8) mm wo zhu guan shang, wo hai shi, xi wang neng gou you suo fen bie.

'mm, (1.8) mm, personally, I still, wish that [the Mandarin varieties I use in China and Singapore] can be kept distinct.'

E: mm.

S: mm, bu yao tai guo, uh kao long. ((chuckle)) yin wei, ze ((zhe)) bu shi yi ge hen hao de: yi ge, xian xiang. mm, yin wei, shi zho:ng, wo xu yao, mm, bao liu lei ((nei)) ge, uh, zui, zui, (2) au[t^h]en- au- au[d]entic de, yi mian jiu shi zui yuan shi de yi mian.

'mm, [I] don't want [the two varieties] to be too, uh converged. ((chuckle)) because, this [convergence] is not a very good sign. mm, because, ultimately, I need, mm, to preserve the, uh, most, most auten- au- authentic ((/th/ pronounced as [d])), side, that is, [my] original way of speaking.'

E: m-hm.

S: dan shi uh, na dang ran yin wei zai zhe bian, zhi shi yin wei huan jing de xu yao suo yi jiu xuan ze, xuan ze yi dian dian –e ((de)) gai bian.

'but uh, of course since I am here, it's only because of the demands of [the local language] context that I chose, chose to change a bit.'

(77) Keeping the two varieties of Mandarin distinct
Ya= Yan, female, late twenties, from Sichuan (SC)

Ya: ke neng wo hui, wo (fa-an) ((fa zhan)) cu ((chu)) yi tao bi jiao, jiu hao-ang ((xiang)) wo zai ze ((zhe)) li gen, xin –a po ren jiang hua wo jiu hui jiang, xin –a po, y- bi jiao xin –a po shi –e ((de)) hua yu=ke shi wo hui dao zong ((zhong)) guo zhi hou, wo hai shi gen wo tong xue hai si ((shi)) ke yi jiang, jiang hui wo yi qian de yu-an ((yan)). bing bu suo ((shi shuo)) w-gai bian le zi ((zhi)) hou wo bu ke yi zai gai bian hui qu z-yang zi.

'maybe I will, develop a way that's more, like when I am here and speaking with Singaporeans, I will use Singapore-style *huayu* [=Mandarin]=but when I return to China, I will still be able to speak my previous language with my former classmates. It's not like I won't be able to revert [to the way I used to use Mainland Mandarin].'

Each of the above three speakers had exhibited a strong ability to adapt to the local ways of using language; in other words, they viewed themselves as having to become bidialectal. Without their metalinguistic comments, it would have been impossible to gather that their *acts of identity* (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), achieved through their apparently seamless use of local language features in a variety of speech contexts involving Singaporeans (as exemplified by Jane and Yan's codeswitching examples in Chapter 7), were in dialectical tension with their own language identities as Mainland Chinese speakers. The metalinguistic comments indicate that what may be characterized as 'accommodation' on the surface is actually linguistic practice mediated by language ideology. SAT or CAT, on the other hand, focuses on social psychological aspects of language behavior and does not take into account the mediating role that language ideology plays in linguistic practice.

Given the speakers' inclination towards keeping their local and non-local linguistic practices *diffuse* (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), why would they then engage in accommodation at all? Yan's illustration in Example (74), in particular, pointed to a degree of saliency to her in regards to how accents which were perceived as different by Singaporean speakers might index linguistic snobbiness as a characteristic linked with individuals who spoke with non-local accents. Other speakers in the study had pointed out a similar locally constructed meaning, whereby the use of distinctive linguistic resources was believed to lead to Singaporeans' social distancing from them. Thus, Yan (as well as the other speakers) understood that the symbolic cost of forming significant social ties with locals lay in the use of a relevant linguistic currency, that is, local language norms, and that the association with "snobbiness," once made, involved far greater cost to prove otherwise.

It might be argued that because of the uncomplimentary social characteristics indexed by the use of non-local features, the speakers prioritized sounding local over manifesting their ideologies of linguistic distinction in their language use. "Sounding local," so to speak, was contingent upon maximally using local language resources. Speakers such as Yan, Jane, and Shell certainly displayed very high levels of use of local resources; the fact that they minimized their use of non-local resources in moments of interaction with Singaporean speakers thus put them in greater advantage than many of the other speakers to project localness in their linguistic practices.

Admittedly, these speakers' abilities to index localness through their language use presuppose that they had gained access to the local language resources. Indeed, it was the case that Yan, Jane, and Shell reported to have significant relationships with Singaporeans both at and outside of their work contexts. Their frequent interactions with

Singaporeans provided them with both continual access to local linguistic norms *and* also many firsthand opportunities to know of, struggle with, or contest social stereotypes or stigmas that Singaporean speakers reportedly associated with foreigners. Therefore, for Yan, Shell, and Yilin, and perhaps even more so for Jane, Grace, Charles, Wei, and William who were Northern speakers, the regularity of their interactions with Singaporean speakers, in which the use of non-Northern features was the unmarked practice, perhaps meant that their use of Northern features was minimized because of the salience of Northern features to Singaporeans as non-local. I propose that the Northern speakers and perhaps some of the Southern speakers as well had developed awareness or sensitivity to the markedness of non-local language resources. In other words, the Northern Mandarin features might have become salient to these Chinese speakers as less appropriate when used with Singaporean speakers than with Mainland speakers.

As such, the salience of the Northern features to the speakers translated into those features being used only in contexts involving specific interlocutors, specifically, interlocutors—mostly Mainland Chinese in China—by whom the speakers' non-local identities had already been ratified. I argue that ratification, that is, acceptance of the Northern speakers' non-local linguistic practices was important, because the only context in which the use of the Northern features would be considered unmarked by the speakers in the Singaporean speech context would have been with interlocutors with whom the Northern speakers had previously established the use of those features as normative.

Jane, Grace, Charles, Wei, and William's abilities to use high levels of Northern features when speaking with Mainland Chinese friends and family and lower levels with other group interviewees and me was thus indicative of their abilities to style-shift, that is, to use the regional Mandarin features differently in a variety of speech contexts, with a

variety of interlocutors. As in *audience design*, whereby speakers use language resources in ways that relate to their audience (Bell, 1984, 1999, 2001), the Northern speakers used Northern features with interlocutors who shared the use of those features at some local level (not in the Singaporean context); similarly, the speakers tended to use non-Northern features with Singaporean interlocutors, given that non-Northern features were unmarked in the Singaporean context.

At one level, like Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) notion of *focusing*, which connotes a gradual adjusting of one's linguistic practices until the practices merge with those of a larger speech community, the minimal use of Northern features with Singaporeans by speakers like Jane, Grace, Charles, Wei, or William indicated their gradual convergence to linguistic practices of Singaporeans. However, at another level, focusing is generally seen as assuming that the linguistic practices of speakers eventually become "homogeneous" with that of the larger community as a result of speakers' projection of similar identities as those of the larger community. The Chinese speakers' linguistic practices would likely not become homogeneous with those of Singaporeans. Style-shifting involving the use of non-local Mandarin features would feature as a practice among the speakers, because as I hope to have shown, even the most "accommodating" speakers like Jane have continued to ideologically construct distinctions in their use of Mandarin in Singapore. Hence, the Chinese speakers fundamentally did not project similar identities as those of Singaporeans.

8.2.3 Rethinking 'familiarity of interlocutors'

Under the 'salience' analysis, speakers used higher levels of Northern Mandarin features with interlocutors who knew of or even shared the speakers' regional linguistic backgrounds. Crucially, the interlocutors would have already established an

understanding that the speakers' use of non-local language resources was accepted practice in their interactions. In view of this analysis, I deem it necessary to rethink 'familiarity of interlocutors' as an explanation for speakers' higher percentages of rhotacization and neutral tone use in certain speech contexts (which was explored in Chapter 6). There are certainly points of overlap between the 'salience' and 'familiarity' analyses in that interlocutors who had ratified the speakers' non-local language use would likely also be familiar to the speakers. However, not all interlocutors who were familiar with the speakers would necessarily have established mutual agreement of what linguistic norms to use.

Many of the Northern speakers used the two features more when speaking with friends and family from China or me than with other Mainland Chinese in the group interviews. I suggest that the Northern speakers had formed prior relationships with their friends and family in which their native use of Mandarin had been (mutually) ratified. The speakers' interactions with me had been established on their knowledge that their status as Mainland Chinese had been made explicit to me from the outset. As well, many of them viewed me as an atypical Singaporean Mandarin speaker with whom they expressed solidarity perhaps because they saw themselves as atypical Mandarin speakers in the local context. They invoked the politics of exceptionalism whereby, they fundamentally persisted in their paradigmatic view of Chinese Singaporeans as "non-proficient" Mandarin speakers by not including me as a Chinese Singaporean speaker, which allowed them to construct a clear—rather than fuzzy—linguistic distinction between Singaporeans and them. Thus, I suggest that the speakers had a greater tendency to uses their native linguistic resources in contexts where their native linguistic backgrounds had been sanctioned by their interlocutors.

Even though all the speakers in the group interviews were from China, the rights and obligations (Myers-Scotton, 1993b) of discourses with fellow Chinese participants had to be created afresh given that many of the speakers did not know one another prior to the interviews. The fact that these Chinese speakers were introduced to each other outside of their native country potentially added a different layer of identity negotiation in that the speakers not only had to establish their regional Mainland linguistic standing with respect to one another, but also contextualize their language use within Singapore.

One of the most common things that group interview participants did was to establish the number of years other participants had been living in Singapore; in the course of the group discussions, some speakers would also point out characteristics of Mainland Chineseness or Singaporean-ness that they observed in the other speakers, oftentimes using those observations to form impressions of the degrees to which other speakers had become "more Singaporean" or "less (Mainland) Chinese." I argue that because speakers had to mediate their linguistic identities in a local yet non-native dimension of interaction with other Mainland Chinese and within a short span of time, the Mandarin features used by the speakers—Northern speakers, in particular—were likely more prone to fluctuate between their 'default' native Northern features and non-Northern features, which were more salient to them as features to use in local interactions.

8.2.4 Contesting localness

Not all speakers were able to or even wanted to access the local language resources in ways that constructed local identities. The resistance to accommodate one's linguistic practices to that of Singaporeans is exemplified by Ying's remark in Example (78) below. Ying revealed her allegiance to Mainland China through expressing her pride

in China's recent (economic) advancements. Her opposition to the notion of hiding her accent so as to hide her Chinese identity, coupled with her remarks that she did not care how Singaporeans perceived her use of non-local Mandarin, indicated her strong contestation of a local identity in Singapore. However, even Ying still used some Singaporean language resources, though to a limited extent.

(78) Ying's affective "indifference" towards Singaporeans view of her use of non-local Mandarin
Y= Ying, female, late thirties, from Xi'an (NC)

Y: wo yi ban bu tai zai((emphatic)) hu ta men ze me kan wo. huo -e ((zhe)) ze me yang shuo zhe ge zhong guo ren ze me ze m-yang. yin- wo jue de hao xiang, ni: mei you she me ma. ni jiu zhong guo ren ni bi you bu- mei you bi yao fou ren zhe yi dian er qie zhong guo zh-yang fa zhan zh-yang hao ye hao wei ta jiao ao. mei you bi yao shuo ((emphatic: animated)) cong yu yin shang lai yan shi. ze me ze me yang =wo cong lai bu zh-yang zuo. ke neng hui you ren kan bu qi, huo -e ((zhe)) xin li shang you yi dian dian qi shi, dan shi wo bu zai hu ta m-n (([men]: neutral tone)) de gan jue.

'I generally don't care ((emphatic)) what they [i.e. Singaporeans] think of me, or what they say about my being a Chinese national. Because I think that, there's nothing wrong. You're a Chinese national you don- there's no need to deny this point. Moreover, [one] ought to be proud that China has been making such strong advancements. There's no need to say ((emphatic)), to conceal [one's Mainland] accent. Like that=I have never done that. Perhaps there are some [Singaporean] people who would look down on [Mainland Chinese], or feel a little discriminatory towards [Mainland Chinese] but I don't care what they think.'

In the above excerpt it was implied that Ying sometimes felt that Singaporeans saw or maybe treated her differently as a Chinese national. Her use of *they* to refer to Singaporeans in the above interview discourse in which I was the interviewer again signaled the politics of exceptionalism in that I somehow did not count as one of "them" (i.e. Singaporeans) who might view her in ways that she had perceived herself as being viewed by Singaporeans.

Like Ying, speakers closer to the leftmost end of the continuum in Figure 8-1 had similarly constructed nationalistic pride towards China and constructed their language use as not amenable to change in Singapore. Thus, these speakers, in general, did not use local language features to project localness. Although a majority of them was conscious of the potential social stigma linked to their use of non-local language features, most of this group of speakers did not interact with Singaporean speakers to the degree that Yan, Jane, or Shell did. Sihui, Laura, Li Chen, Dan, Julia, and Xiaobo, who worked most closely among other Mainland Chinese, reported that they were involved in looseknit and simple networks (Milroy, 1980) with other Mainland Chinese and in even looser networks with Singaporeans. Hence, I argue that whether or not to converge to the local language norms was less of a factor to these speakers than it was for speakers who interacted frequently with Singaporeans, because they constructed themselves as not even in close enough range of interactions with Singaporeans to be directly affected by—and to respond to—how Singaporean speakers perceived them.

To sum up, in this section, I have discussed the meanings associated with the linguistic behaviors of two groups of speakers in this study, that is, those whose linguistic behaviors were closer to either end of a continuum of non-local (i.e. Mainland) to local (i.e. Singaporean) linguistic norms. On the one hand, the speakers who exhibited convergence to local linguistic norms, as it were, did not always "accommodate" in the conventional sense in regards to their ideologies of Mandarin use in Singapore. Speakers sometimes drew on the ideological differentiation of Mainland and Singaporean varieties of Mandarin, using linguistic condescension as a form of "convergence" to the use of "simpler" and "less authentic" Mandarin. On the other hand, the speakers who displayed less convergence to local norms expressed ideologies of linguistic security, thereby

showing evidence of their linguistic distancing from Singaporeans. In the next section, I focus on speakers like Charles and Wei from Group 2 in Figure 8-1, whose frequent use of local language resources and fluctuations in the levels of use of non-local resources indicated linguistic flexibility, which I had suggested in Chapter 6. I then use linguistic flexibility as a springboard into a discussion of how the Chinese speakers' language use related to Singaporean linguistic practices and speakers.

8.3 STRATEGIC LIMINALITY: LAYING CLAIMS TO SYMBOLIC POWER AT THE MARGINS OF MEMBERSHIP WITHIN THE SINGAPOREAN SPEECH COMMUNITY

8.3.1 Linguistic flexibility and linguistic security

As discussed in Chapter 6, I suggested that Charles' and Wei's high levels of rhotacization in contexts involving Mainland Chinese friends and family, in contrast to low levels of neutral tone use, stemmed from a certain degree of linguistic flexibility that enabled them to draw on many or all of the language resources available to them. As can be seen from their metalinguistic remarks in Examples (79)-(80) below, the speakers were both aware of the fact that their use of Mandarin in Singapore had become different from that in China. Neither speaker expressed any particular need to monitor or correct the way he used Mandarin in Singapore to sound like their native use of Mandarin.

(79) Able to revert back to using native Mandarin
Ch= Charles, male, late twenties, from Beijing (NC)
E= Er-Xin

Ch: **'er ru mu ran'** ba wo jue de jiu shi ((chuckle)) zhen de dui dui, jiu shi, wo wo ge ren bi jiao r r r ru- bi jiao, **wo bi jiao qing xiang yu rong ru yi ge huan jing** uh.

'[I was] 'subconsciously influenced' [by the local linguistic practices] I think ((chuckle)) that is, I personally am more, more, I am prone to assimilate into new environments.'

E: m.

Ch: jin liang xiang ta men yi yang. bu ran wo hui jue de, hen WAI LAI de gan jue uh.

'[I] try to be like them [i.e. Singaporeans]. Otherwise I will feel, very much like an OUTSIDER.'

…

Ch: wo jue de wo yi ding, yi ding bu hui bian (de), zhe ge. yin wei, (1) mu yu shang lai jiang, wo jue de, hen nan gai bian uh. zhe-i ((yi)) ge, bu guan, **bu guan wo ze me shou dao xin -a po ying xiang, wo hui qu yi hou, you ge ji tian, yi ding yi ding you hui lai.**

'I think I will definitely, definitely not change this [i.e. my native *Putonghua*]. Because (1) as [my] native language, it will be very difficult to change, I think. **No matter how much [my language use] has been affected by being in Singapore, when I go back [to China], after a few days, [my native use of *Putonghua*] will definitely definitely come back.**'

(80) Able to "control" use of native Mandarin variety
W= Wei, male, late twenties, from Inner Mongolia (NC)
E= Er-Xin

W: u:h, (4) shuo shi-i [zai] hua hui you yi dian *lah*. dan shi wo hui kong zhi=wo jue de wo hai neng gou gai, gai bian hui lai.

'u:h, (4) to be honest there has [been] slight [modifications to my use of Mandarin] *lah*. **But I am able to control [my use of Mandarin]=I feel I can still change, change it back.**

E: m.

W: suo yi zhe ge wo bu yong dan xi- wo jue de wo hai bu yong dan xin.

'therefore I don't have to worry about [becoming too assimilated to the local language use]- I think I still don't have to worry.'

The fact that these speakers expressed confidence in their native language varieties remaining unchanged resonated with the ideologies of Yan and Shell in Examples (76) and (77). Such construction of idealism about their native varieties being impervious to local linguistic influences conveyed that Charles and Wei's flexible use of local language resources was not a reflection of ungroundedness in their native language

varieties. On the contrary, I propose that it was the speakers' linguistic securities through which their use of resources from other language varieties was constructed to be non-threatening to their native varieties that might have brought about speakers' openness to adopting local language resources as a way to supplement—rather than supplant—their existing Mainland Chinese communicative behaviors. Ironically, of course, there is evidence that such language contact does influence the native variety in complex and subtle ways.

Traditionally, linguistically *insecure* speakers are ones who tend to use linguistic features or speech styles not generally associated with or accessible to the social groups to which they belong, while linguistically *secure* speakers, seeing no need to attain to the prestige norms of another group, tend to keep to their regular use of language features (Labov, 1966, 1972b, 2006). Studies such as Labov's predominantly locate linguistically insecure speakers on the periphery of social groups, striving to achieve ingroup status through the adoption of features of speakers in the core.

What I have actually proposed in the case of speakers like Charles and Wei and in fact all the speakers in the study who engaged in the use of moderate-to-high levels of Singaporean linguistic features, is that they were in fact secure with their native language use, as constructed by their language ideologies (seen in Chapter 5 and in this chapter). It is not surprising that the speakers in this study displayed security in their native language varieties, given that they were professionals who already possessed various forms of capital (to use Bourdieu's (1977) notion of symbolic and linguistic capitals). Unskilled migrants (especially those in the past), on the other hand, lacked many of those capitals; the adoption of local language behaviors not only was a must in terms of helping the migrants gain access to jobs in the new context, but it was also a way to accrue linguistic

capital in the absence of other forms of capital. Therefore, unlike unskilled migrants, the Mainland speakers in this study perhaps did not see the need to adopt the use of local linguistic practices strictly for the betterment of their economic status; instead, their use of local linguistic resources perhaps signified that they had sufficient linguistic and cultural capitals (along with economic capital) and could thus exercise their ability to choose from the various linguistic resources.

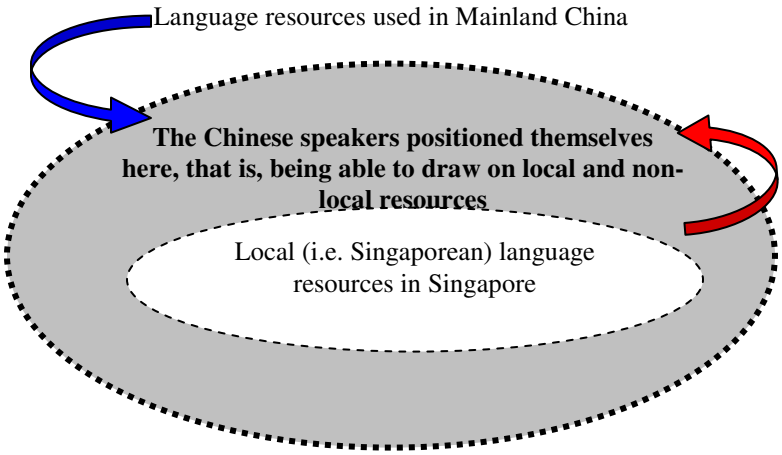
Speakers in the core of social groups are usually portrayed as being relatively focused in their language use (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Given that in Singapore the core would consist of speakers who use local language resources only, I argue that the focusing of linguistic practices to resemble that of the core was not borne out in the local linguistic behaviors of the Chinese speakers in this study. The fact that a majority of the Chinese speakers preferred to use their non-local language resources, drawing on local language resources only as an added bonus to the extension of their local communicative behaviors—a kind of strategy of condescension (cf. Bourdieu, 1977), served as evidence that most of the speakers were 'linguistically secure' in their language use and likely did not aspire to align fully with Chinese Singaporean speakers. As a collective group, Mainland Chinese speakers did not construct themselves as being in the core of the Singaporean linguistic context; although we did see that the speakers who were married to Singaporeans exhibited greater levels of use of Singaporean features than most of the other speakers, their language ideologies signaled that they were more aligned with Mainland Chinese than with Singaporeans.

Hence, I suggest that the speakers located themselves on the margins of the community, whereby through their continued use of their native, non-local Mandarin resources, mediated by their ideologies of linguistic differentiation from Singaporeans,

they were able to distance themselves from speakers at the core. Speakers on the peripheries of speech communities are often ascribed statuses of *outsiders* or "*lames*" by speakers in the core to speakers whose practices do not fall into the norms of the larger community (Chambers, 2003; Labov, 1972a). While the Mainland speakers knew that Singaporeans tended to view them as 'outsiders' and could simply have accepted this category as assigned to them by Singaporeans, by strategically positioning themselves through their language ideologies and linguistic behaviors as being on the fringes of the local speech community, the Mainland speakers showed that they were *actively claiming* the 'outsider' status, that is, signaling that the choice to be 'outsiders' was made by them, not so much based on what Singaporeans thought of them.

In Figure 8-2 below, the areas within the concentric rings represent the various language resources available in Singapore; outside the outer ring are resources from languages in Mainland China. By positioning themselves in the periphery, as shown by the shaded area, the speakers thus had the flexibility of drawing on language resources from within and also outside the Singaporean context.

Figure 8-2: Singaporean language resources at the core; schematic representation of the Chinese speakers' positioning with respect to the use of language resources



Conventionally, outsiders are portrayed as not being able to fully access the prestige norms used by speakers at the core, while speakers from hegemonic groups are seen as being able to engage in *crossing* (Bucholtz, 1999; Rampton, 1995, 1997) into minority or peripheral groups. Crossing, usually occurring in liminal moments (Turner, 1974) in which the speakers temporarily depart from or suspend their use of dominant linguistic norms, is usually used by members of the majority group to appropriate the identities of peripheral groups or to claim new and distinct identities. Such constructions of non-dominant groups as being dis-empowered were clearly not applicable to Mainland Chinese speakers in this study, even though they were located on the margins of the speech community.

The Mainland Chinese speakers were able to move across national and linguistic boundaries between them and Singaporean speakers in ways that resembled crossing, but not exactly in the way that crossing occurred in Rampton's studies. I argue that the

Mainland speakers viewed themselves as being part of a dominant social group: being native Mainland Chinese and therefore having strong transnational ties to the Mainland Chinese community). The speakers' use of final particles or mixed language resources, while reflecting convergence to local language behaviors, might have been a momentary display of crossing into the local linguistic community. Many drew on local language resources in interactional moments to reduce social distance with Singaporeans and also for other functional purposes such as improving their English competencies (as shown in Chapter 7). In fact, I argue that it was precisely the speakers' positions on the outskirts of the local linguistic community that provided them with the moment-to-moment choice between using their native language resources and moving into the 'core' through the use of local resources. However, the fact that many of the speakers used non-local resources in addition to the Singaporean resources may have made their linguistic practices stand out from both Singaporean and Mainland Chinese norms, making these Chinese speakers' linguistic behaviors liminal, that is, appearing to be neither Mainland Chinese nor Singaporean.

I propose that being liminal in the local linguistic context enabled the speakers to convey vagueness, even strategically, with respect to their alignments with the local linguistic practices or with Singaporean speakers. At the level of linguistic practice, speakers may use local resources in ways that appear to let them *pass* (Bucholtz, 1995), that is, to use just enough local linguistic resources for them to come across to others as local speakers and to temporarily reduce social distance. It is only at a closer level of examination that one might be able to discern that sometimes slight modifications in the linguistic practices of these speakers such as the use of 'bivalent' mixed language

resources (in Chapter 7) could give away a certain degree of distinctiveness in their speech as compared to the linguistic norms of Singaporean speakers.

Being liminal, speakers could utilize local language resources *and at the same time* project distance from Singaporean linguistic practices through their non-local language ideologies. It is through these seemingly conflicting processes that speakers were able to construct identities of distinction from Singaporeans. To illustrate, as an English language learner seeking to improve his proficiency in the language, William had reported that he used English regularly with Singaporean speakers. However, as his comments in Example (81) indicate, the use of Singaporean English was constructed as merely a word-for-word translation from Mandarin.

(81) Constructing the local linguistic context as suitable for practicing English while undermining Singaporean English
WL= William, male, late twenties, from Xi'an (NC)
E= Er-Xin

WL: zai xin jia po shuo ying wen hen jian dan. zhi –ao ((yao)) ni hui shuo zhong wen=ni ren shi dan ci, ba ying wen an zhao zhong wen de yu xu shuo chu lai yi ding you ren ting de dong. hen jian dan. zhen de hen jian dan. wo yuan lai shuo ying yu wo shuo bu liao hen liu li.

'It is easy to speak English in Singapore. As long as you can speak zhongwen ((=Chinese language=Mandarin))=((if)) you know individual words in English, ((and can)) put together the English words according to the word order in zhongwen, ((then)) someone is bound to understand you. It is very simple. It is really very simple. At first I couldn't speak English very fluently.'

E: ((back-channeling))

WL: zi cong wo fa xian zhe –e ((ge)) (si?) li zhi hou, (3.5) mei ci can jia meeting ((equal stress on both syllables)), wo shi jue de, mei you ren bu dong de.

'Ever since I discovered this (method of communication), everytime at a meeting, I would find that nobody would have trouble understanding ((my spoken English)).'

William's reduction of Singaporean English to a mere translation of Mandarin signaled his low regard for Singaporean English. Although he viewed Singapore as a suitable context for learning English, William had expressed reservations about the proficiencies of Singaporean English speakers. Perceiving that the learning of English in Singapore would be capped at the "limited" proficiencies of the locals, William noted that English learners like him would not be able to master English at a more advanced level of proficiency. Thus, William had simultaneously constructed for himself the roles of learner and arbiter of Singaporean English, with the learner role conveyed through his use of English in speech contexts with local speakers and the role of arbiter conveyed through his metalinguistic comments.

William's self-confidence in distancing himself from the local use of English was reminiscent of many speakers' claims to distinguish themselves as cultural and linguistic arbiters (cf. Chapter 5). Just as many of the Chinese speakers had often claimed symbolic power over Singaporeans (Bourdieu, 1977) as they engaged in the arbitration of Singaporean Mandarin by drawing on their ideologies of 'standardness' as Mainland Chinese language practitioners, William had evoked and further, extended that symbolic power onto his assessment of Singaporean English, despite the fact that he was just a learner.

Metalinguistic discourses such as William's in Example (81) conveyed ideological distance from Singaporeans, but also pointed to the fact that speakers viewed their use of certain local language resources as resembling, if not, converging to the practices of Singaporeans. Yet, I had argued above that the Chinese speakers in general took pride in their native varieties of Mandarin and did not aspire to become "Singaporean" in the sense of aligning completely with local linguistic practices. If they

were not aspiring to achieve any social status associated with local speakers, then their convergence might thus indicate that they were in fact reminiscent of passing or perhaps crossing. Their actions thus present a very unique situation: the temporary movement *from a non-dominant to a dominant group* using local resources without being flagged as transgressive by the dominant group, that is, the local speakers. I shall return to address how such a movement towards the local dominant group was possible towards the end of this chapter.

8.4 CONSTRUCTING CHINA AT THE 'CENTER' AND AUTHENTICATING ONE'S MAINLAND CHINESENESS IN SINGAPORE

Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall's (2004b) theorizing of identity as relational, I demonstrate that the speakers in this study constructed their Chinese identities in relation to various Singaporean practices. More importantly, as a collective group, the speakers had elevated their Mainland Chinese identities and demoted the local Chineseness of Singaporeans through each of the different levels of relationality known as *tactics of intersubjectivity*.

Adequation versus distinction

As examined in Chapter 5, many of the Chinese speakers adequated themselves with Chinese Singaporeans, that is, positioned themselves as sharing more similarities than differences with Chinese Singaporeans by appealing to a common "cultural heritage." Speakers' imaginations of Singaporeans' ritual practices as consonant with rituals historically practiced in China enabled a transnational restoration of sorts of China's lost ritual practices.

However, with respect to Chinese Singaporeans non-ritual practices, the speakers marked distinction by suppressing aspects of their social or linguistic practices that were similar. Instead, they highlighted differences with respect to dialectal differences, 'standards' of Mandarin used locally and in China, and speakers' proficiencies in English with a view to construct their native language varieties and linguistic practices as more "stable" and more "standard" than the varieties and practices of Chinese Singaporeans.

Authentication versus denaturalization

I have shown in Chapter 7 that speakers undermined the use of local Mandarin features. Again, their language ideologies which revealed their preferential attitudes towards Mainland Mandarin varieties proved to be influential in their iconization and erasure of Singapore Mandarin. They devalued Singaporean Mandarin, that is, constructed the use of Singaporean Mandarin as not a full-fledged variety like their native varieties; hence, they denaturalized Singaporean Mandarin speakers, authenticating themselves as better speakers of Mandarin than Singaporeans.

In Chapter 7, I discussed the Chinese speakers as deferring to the use of Singaporean English in speech situations involving the mixed use of English and Mandarin, despite some speakers' construction of the proficiencies in English among Singaporeans as not "up to par" with native speakers of other varieties of English. Hence, while denaturalizing Singaporean speakers in relation to their English proficiencies, a majority of the Chinese speakers nonetheless constructed the functional value of Singaporean English as sufficient, as it were, for their current language learning purposes.

Authorization versus illegitimation

The speakers' authentication of their identities as native Mandarin speakers closely fed into their authorization of themselves as possessing institutional power of sorts to arbitrate the use of Mandarin in Singapore. Speakers authorized themselves as gatekeepers of not just Mandarin varieties, but of language varieties associated with Mainland China. For instance, most of the Chinese speakers accepted the use of final particles in Singapore as primordially linked to Mainland Chinese languages; therefore many speakers engaged in the use of those particles even though they had acknowledged that final particles normally occurred in lower frequencies in China.

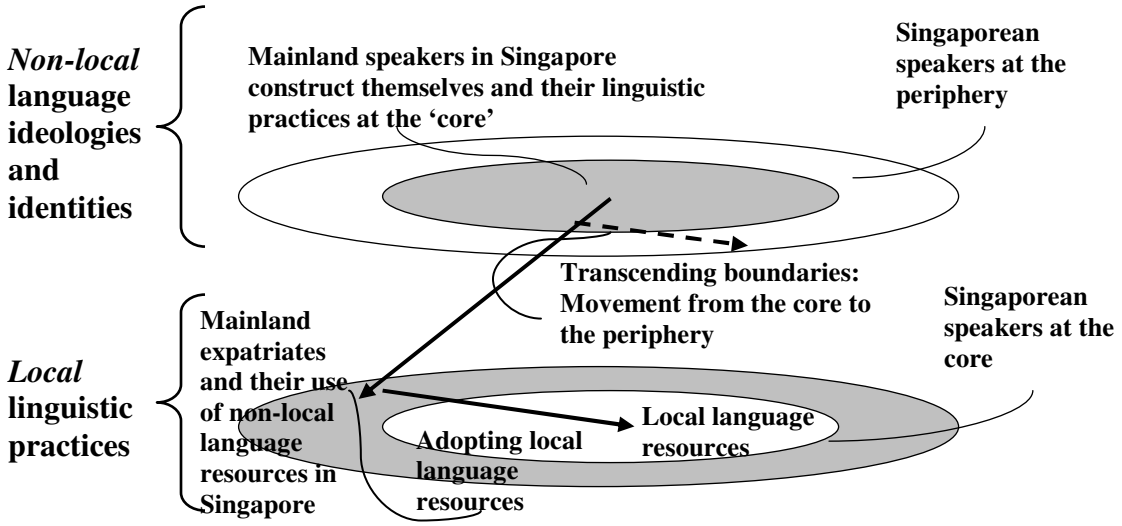
Further, though seemingly contradictory to their own engagement in the mixing of language resources in conversations, a few speakers had conveyed disapproval of Singaporeans' use of English in Mandarin discourses. Speakers can be faulted for using "too much" of a language variety other than their ascribed native language and be dubbed as inauthentic by their speakers from their community (Walters, 2003). In a similar vein, that segment of Chinese speakers that expressed disapproval at the mixed use of English and Mandarin viewed the use of Mandarin—specifically, 'standard' or 'pure' Mandarin—as an essential cultural property which Chinese Singaporeans ought to possess. As such, I argue that Singaporeans' use of English in Mandarin discourse was constructed as illegitimizing Mandarin to a certain degree. Singaporean speakers who regularly codeswitch were thus considered inauthentic Mandarin speakers; their legitimacy as ethnic Chinese, therefore, was undermined.

On the other hand, I suggest that many of the Chinese speakers perceived their use of English in Mandarin discourses as more occasional than the frequency of use among Chinese Singaporeans. For the majority of the speakers whose use of English

(along with other local resources) took place less frequently than speakers such as Jane, Yan, or Shell, they might just be temporarily suspending their use of Mainland language resources when speaking with Singaporeans. Although I would not go so far as to say that they authorized their use of English in Mandarin discourse, it certainly seemed plausible that many of the Chinese speakers did not de-legitimate their own use of Mandarin.

Speakers' differential attitudes towards Singaporean ritual and non-ritual practices, language varieties and practices all pointed to the fact that the focal point of their perspectivizing about similarities and differences between Singaporeans and themselves was skewed towards China. Hence, I argue that the Chinese speakers in fact constructed China at the 'center' in their ideological perspectivizing of their language and cultural identities. For their language use in Singapore, the Chinese speakers mediated between two levels, one local (i.e. Singapore) and one non-local (i.e. Mainland China), shown below in Figure 8-3. Speakers' linguistic practices in Singapore, I propose, were trans-locally mediated by their positionings in relation to Mainland Chinese and Singaporeans, which were constructed at the non-local level involving Mainland Chinese ideologies. The 'centering' of Mainland China occurred at the non-local level and is represented by the central ring in the series of concentric rings.

Figure 8-3: Interaction between speakers' non-local language ideologies and identities and their local linguistic practices



Given the ideological situating of Mainland China at the center, Singaporean linguistic practices were cast as peripheral practices and Singaporean speakers were thus viewed as marginal, shown by the outermost ring on the top series of rings. At the same level of ideology and identity construction, the Chinese speakers constructed themselves at the 'core', as represented by the shaded area in the top layer of concentric rings.

Even though the speakers were distant from Mainland China in terms of geographical proximity, their use of non-local Mandarin resources at the level of 'local linguistic practices' was drawn on Mainland Chinese 'standards' of Mandarin. The process in which non-local ideologies and identities influenced the use of non-local, that is, Mainland linguistic resources in Singapore is indicated by the arrow pointing down from the top rings to the outer edge of the rings on the bottom of Figure 8-3.

Speakers who drew on non-local language resources in Singapore can be viewed as subverting the linguistic practices of Singaporeans by trans-locally drawing on

resources from China via language ideologies that portrayed Mainland Chinese speakers as "standard" Mandarin speakers. However, recalling that the usage rates for the Northern Mandarin features—especially that for rhotacization—were generally low, we can probably assume that the meanings for the use of the Northern features at the non-local level were somehow altered at the local level. Rhotacization, for example, which could index local, region-specific meanings like 'smoothness' in Beijing (Zhang, 2005, forthcoming), very likely lost its regional meaning in the Singaporean linguistic context, perhaps merely indicating markedness when used in Singapore. As such, the reduced use of those Northern features in Singapore might have been related to the fact that speakers no longer could use those features in ways that the local meanings in China would be valued by their Singaporean interlocutors. Hence, I hope to have shown that even though the non-local level did seem to influence the Chinese speakers' use of non-local resources in Singapore, the speakers' use of those features was also subject to mitigating forces at the local level, making the subversive effect of the use of the non-local resources perhaps less prominent than if the speakers had used higher levels of those features.

In light of the fact that speakers positioned themselves as ideologically aligned with Mainland China, the speakers constructed *symbolic domination* (Bourdieu, 1982) over Singaporeans, invoking cultural authority through the various ways outlined above in which they constructed distinction, denaturalization, and illegitimation with respect to Singaporeans. The inversion of 'core' and 'periphery' between the local and non-local levels corresponded to a flip-flop in the groups to which speakers belonged or perceived themselves as belonging. At the non-local Mainland Chinese level, the speakers in fact aligned themselves closely with the core and thus constructed dominance at that level. At the local level, speakers' use of Singaporean language resources was in fact mediated by

an ideological "crossing" from the core to the periphery at the non-local level, shown by the discontinuous arrow from the core to the periphery.

The Mainland Chinese speakers' linguistic transcendence from the margin to the core occurred via their construction of linguistic hegemony (cf. Woolard, 1985) at a supra-local level (that is, projecting from Mainland Chinese ideologies), whereby their Mainland Mandarin practices and ideologies were constructed as relevant to their linguistic practices in Singapore. In other words, they constructed their language identity in the local context as largely influenced by Mainland Chinese practices. The fact that their use of local language resources was constructed metalinguistically as not to indicate identification with Chinese Singaporeans but to help them achieve specific communicative goals signaled their subversion of the linguistic dominance of local speakers, despite the fact that they were "minorities" on the margins of that local community.

Their use of Singaporean resources in light of their projection of cultural and linguistic dominance over Chinese Singaporeans revealed that they were in fact subverting the dominant group, Chinese Singaporeans. Language behaviors which seem to reflect convergence to linguistically dominant groups have been exhibited among migrant populations (cf. Bortoni-Ricardo, 1985; Britain, 2002, 2005; Kerswill & Williams, 2005; Miller, 2005); but in this study, the speakers demonstrated via their ideologies that they were not in fact aligning with speakers from the receiving community but, rather, challenging the receiving community's linguistic dominance by drawing on ideologies from their sending community.

As I hope to have shown, the Chinese speakers in this study, through their linguistic behaviors or ideologies, indicated distance from Singaporean linguistic

practices; their distance from Singaporean linguistic practices worked in tandem with their closeness to Mainland Chinese practices. The various ways in which the speakers authenticated themselves as Mainland Chinese, such as the fact that many constructed their native Mandarin varieties as more 'standard' or viewed themselves as more grounded in the richness of the historical and cultural legacy of Mainland China than Singaporean Mandarin, thus showed that the speakers' ties to their homeland were in many ways constructed as uninterrupted and even reinforced by their linguistic differentiation from Singaporean practices.

At this juncture, I now return to the topical issue of speakers' ability to engage in what seems like "crossing" even though by virtue of their use of non-local language resources in Singapore, they were in a non-dominant group. I should point out that although speakers' seeming transcendence of nationality boundaries in instances of use of local language resources may reflect certain commonalities shared with language crossing, there is nonetheless a distinction between crossing in Rampton's terms and the language behaviors of Chinese Singaporeans.

Crossing tends to occur in moments of performative or stylized speech in which speakers draw on language varieties or features from others' linguistic practices, at the same time, exhibiting *double-voicing* (Bakhtin, 1981), that is, using language that someone else has used at one point or another, while potentially distinguishing oneself from that language or 'voice'. In the case of many of the Mainland speakers in this study, it is not clear if the moments in which they used Singaporean language resources actually reflected double-voicing; in fact, for speakers like Jane, Yan, and Shell who used local language resources at higher frequencies than the others, it did not seem to be the case that they were crossing.

What seems to be clear is that the Mainland speakers' use of local language resources reflected that their language behaviors in the local linguistic context were motivated and selective, as evidenced by their language ideologies. As Coupland and Jowarski (Coupland, 2001; Coupland & Jaworski, 2004) have noted, language use (particularly with respect to the use of variable styles) is highly contextualized; it is hence ideology-driven and consciously or unconsciously motivated both intra- and inter-personally. An examination of variation in language use without investigation into the metalanguage—what language and language use are to speakers and what speakers think they should be—would thus fail to capture linguistic practices as agentful acts of identification constrained by ideologies. It is my hope that my analysis of how speakers' ideologies shape speakers' language use in this complex linguistic situation involving Mainland speakers situated at the intersection of two seemingly similar yet distinct social groups has served to underscore the significance of ideologies in language use.

8.5 SUMMARY

To summarize, the speakers' marking of distinction between their local and non-local linguistic behaviors particularly underscored the point that their native Mainland Mandarin varieties bore significant value to them, perhaps even greater than that of the local linguistic resources in the Singaporean linguistic market. It was to be expected that the speakers found value in the use of local resources in Singapore because of the social implications involved were they not to use them; but the fact that the speakers valorized their native Mainland varieties in spite of the varieties' reduced functionality in Singapore indicated that the speakers assigned symbolic power to their native Mainland varieties. This symbolic power was invoked by way of the speakers projecting the

relative values of the different regional varieties of Mandarin onto a global level of comparison, where the functional value of Mainland Mandarin varieties was deemed to be greater than that of Singaporean Mandarin.

The Chinese speakers conveyed linguistic security and did not fully align with Singaporeans in their linguistic practices and ideologies, sometimes in subtle but observable ways. The linguistic flexibility observed in the behaviors of some speakers, I argue, was fueled by their security in their native language varieties. Their alignment with Mainland Chinese practices and partial alignment with Singaporean linguistic practices, achieved through their use of local language resources to some degree, might be conceived of as an awkward, liminal positioning with respect to Singaporeans. However, as I have shown in this chapter, the speakers' positioning as 'neither here nor there' was in some ways purposeful and powerful, enabling them to construct localness on their own terms while projecting their Chinese identities beyond the local context.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have explored Mainland Chinese speakers' identity construction in relation to Chinese Singaporeans, in view of the fact that certain aspects of Chinese identity are essentialized as universally shared by all who are Chinese. This ideology circulating within the larger Chinese community seems to over-simplify Chineseness by constructing differences across communities of Chinese people as somehow inconsequential to identity construction. While such an ideology might act as a unifying force that binds Chinese peoples together at a supra-national level, it certainly could not be the only ideology governing how Chinese people relate to one another at local levels of interaction.

This dissertation examined a unique situation whereby two Chinese communities—one Mainland Chinese, the other 'Overseas Chinese'—actually co-existed within one local context. It was through this unique context and at this local level that the interaction of the different layers of Chinese identity could really be explored. Mainland Chinese who have never left China might tend to view their ethnic Chinese identity as inseparable from their national Chinese identity and their linguistic practices and linguistic identity. The Mainland Chinese in this study, through their commentaries about local cultural practices and their actual linguistic practices, displayed that ethnicity and nationality factored differently into the ways in which they positioned themselves in relation to Chinese Singaporeans.

In Singapore, the presence of Mainland Chinese has generated lukewarm reception among some locals, which is due in part to a perception that Mainland Chinese professionals, comprising a sizeable group of "foreign talents" recruited by the Singaporean State, had filled positions that ought to have been given to Singaporeans.

Also, the Mainland Chinese, especially females, faced potential social stigma because of certain negative social images cast by a small segment of the Mainland Chinese population in Singapore. At first glance, the tension between Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese that was portrayed in the local media might have suggested that clear-cut boundaries defined by differences in nationality separated Chinese Singaporeans from Mainland Chinese.

As I hope to have shown in this dissertation, however, the Mainland speakers' relationship with Chinese Singaporeans cannot be defined in terms of the drawing of strict distinctions based on nationality or territorial boundaries. The Mainland speakers might have distinguished themselves linguistically from Chinese Singaporeans, therein appearing to draw ideological boundaries based on differences in linguistic and non-ritual practices between them and Chinese Singaporeans; however, in addressing Chinese Singaporean practices, they appealed to certain similarities which they attributed to their shared ethnicity, defined by their common ancestry with Chinese Singaporeans. Although the Mainland speakers disaligned from Chinese Singaporeans with respect to certain practices and ideologies, they aligned with Chinese Singaporeans in other respects. Nonetheless, the Mainland speakers' ideologies of Mainland Chinese and Chinese Singaporean practices indicated their strong transnational ties to their homeland. The speakers also tended to authenticate their own practices (or Mainland Chinese practices in general) with respect to Chinese Singaporean practices, therein asserting their Mainland Chinese identity while living and working among a dominant group of non-Mainland Chinese.

The Mainland speakers positioned themselves differently with respect to Chinese Singaporean ritual practices, on the one hand, and non-ritual and linguistic practices, on

the other. The speakers' interview discourses revealed that they constructed distinctiveness from Chinese Singaporeans in regards to the linguistic and non-ritual practices, but constructed the local ritual practices as emblematic of ethnic Chinese practices. The Mainland speakers essentialized this type of practice as demonstrative of a common cultural and ethnic heritage shared between Chinese Singaporeans and them, hence, exhibiting through their adequation of Chinese Singaporeans that ethnic identity transcended national boundaries. Their construction of sameness with Chinese Singaporeans by foregrounding just one type of practice thus provided evidence for the pervasiveness of essentialist construction of Chineseness within the larger Chinese community.

Even more significant than the portrayal of a shared ethnic identity was the fact that many of the Mainland Chinese used the local ritual practices to help them remember the past—China's past. Let us not forget that the local ritual practices were merely claimed to be similar to those previously practiced in China. Given that many of the speakers' claims were, after all, not based on their own lived experiences with China's past cultural practices, the claims about the authenticity of the ritual practices in Singapore might not have been accurate. As Hall (1990) has noted with regard to the construction of cultural identities, the past is constructed in ways that may not necessarily be accurate but, rather, is based mainly on imagination. The ways that individuals fantasize about the past thus reveals a "politics of positions," that is, individuals' intersubjective positionings.

In the case of the Mainland speakers' positionings in relation to Chinese Singaporeans, I have shown that although their authentication of Chinese Singaporean ritual traditions conveyed their ethnic alignment with Singaporeans, their affinity towards

Singaporean ritual practices was nonetheless grounded in a desire to invoke China, their homeland, as the original source of the practices. By identifying Chinese Singaporean ritual practices as originating in China, therefore, the Mainland speakers were in fact authenticating themselves as cultural arbiters. The speakers constructed the fact that they were from Mainland China as instrumental in enabling them to recognize that many Mainland ritual practices had been "lost" and to "find" those practices in Singapore. They thus perceived that they were linked more directly with the ritual practices than Chinese Singaporeans by virtue of their native ties to the Mainland.

With respect to linguistic practices, the Mainland speakers exhibited their steadfast alignment with the standards of Mainland varieties of Mandarin. Constructing themselves as linguistic gatekeepers, the speakers legitimized Singaporean Mandarin by adequating it with Mainland varieties yet, at the same time, conveyed that Singaporeans' proficiency in Singaporean Mandarin was lacking in comparison to that of Mainland Chinese speakers. Moreover, some speakers also extended their self-ascribed gatekeeping role to the local variety of English by assessing it in light of other varieties of English. The Mainland speakers' distancing from Chinese Singaporeans' linguistic practices thus indicated that ideologically, the speakers kept within territorial (i.e. Mainland Chinese) limits. However, their actual linguistic practices revealed that their language identities were not shaped by ideologies formed at a trans-local territorial level alone, but rather, also informed by locally held ideologies.

The speakers' use of local language resources, particularly, their mixed use of Mandarin and English discourse, was linked to the locals' ideologies which cast Mandarin speakers as less successful than English speakers. They did not view the use of Singaporean English to be deleterious to their social image, whereas they perceived that

the use of Singaporean Mandarin might only hamper their success in Singapore, not to mention that they had constructed Singaporean speakers of Mandarin to be less proficient than they were anyway. Thus, the speakers had exhibited careful alignment with the positive social image of English-speaking Singaporeans by drawing on the locally emblematic use of English—albeit interspersed with Mandarin.

Their use of final particles, while not directly linked with indexing a positive social image, was nonetheless conveyed in their metalinguistic comments as helpful to adding a hint of localness to their Mandarin and, thus, able to help narrow their perceived communicative gap in their use of Mandarin with Singaporeans. Hence, the speakers' use of local language resources often comprised strategies that enabled them to benefit from local meanings of the use of the available language varieties as well as to come across to local speakers as knowledgeable of the local linguistic norms.

I have shown that many of the Northern speakers displayed abilities to use Northern Mandarin resources variably in interlocutor-dependent speech contexts. Given that the usage rates for the two Northern features, rhotacization and neutral tones, were generally low and that the speakers used higher levels of the Northern features with certain groups of Mainland speakers than with other speakers, I have proposed that the speakers were likely aware of the potential for indexing 'foreignness' through their use of those non-local features in the Singaporean context; thus, they used non-local features selectively with interlocutors who might not take issue with their foreign status (the interlocutors would, then, tend to be those with whom the speakers were familiar).

While the speakers might have used non-local features less frequently with me or other Mainland speakers with whom their language use was established only within the local linguistic context and not pre-established in China, I have also suggested that the

salience of the Northern features to the speakers did not mean that non-local Mandarin features were not valorized by the speakers. In investigating the speakers' range of linguistic behaviors using both local and non-local resources, I have found that though they had adopted the use of local language resources, *all* the speakers still had very strong ideologies that indicated their predilection towards their native Mainland varieties of Mandarin. Even Jane, whose language use in local interactions demonstrated the highest degree of convergence among all the speakers in this study (see Figure 8-1on p.237), had continued to use the neutral tone, a Northern Mandarin feature with her Mainland Chinese mother. Therefore, in light of the Mainland speakers' critical evaluations of Singaporean Mandarin and the language competencies of its speakers, I hope to have shown that the Mainland speakers very much valued their own native Mandarin varieties.

In this study, I have sought to address the degrees to which the Mainland speakers made use of local and non-local language resources to reflect their positionings with respect to Chinese Singaporeans. Had the study utilized only quantitative analysis to explain speakers' use of linguistic features, the Mainland speakers' low percentages of use of Northern Mainland features and productive use of Singaporean resources might possibly have been analyzed as indicative of their overall 'convergence' to the local linguistic behaviors of locals. Additionally, the linguistic convergence might have signaled that the Mainland speakers had positioned themselves more closely with Chinese Singaporeans than they actually did.

Quantitative analysts might have run statistical analyses of variance to decipher the significance of the interaction of the local and non-local resources. However, the statistical analyses most probably would not have been able to elegantly explicate the complicated nature of ethnicity, nationality, and culture (especially language use) in the

Mainland speakers' positionings in relation to Chinese Singaporeans. It was only through the qualitative examination of speakers' construction of ideologies regarding Mainland and Singaporean language varieties and language use as well as non-linguistic practices that the actual identity work among the Mainland speakers could be elucidated.

I have also sought to address how the linguistic construction of complex identities could contribute to current research in Modern Chinese transnationalism. Chinese people living overseas have been referred to as having "flexible citizenships" (Ong, 1997, 1999) whereby the flows and exchanges within the network of Overseas Chinese have been constructed as increasingly deterritorialized as Overseas Chinese have been portrayed as playing a pivotal role as a bridge between Mainland Chinese and the non-Chinese world (Ma & Cartier, 2003; Ong, 1999; Ong & Nonini, 1997). Conversely, while China was once viewed as the 'cultural core' along with Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, its cultural hold on the Chinese community-at-large has been viewed as waning as traditional cultural practices have been eradicated within Mainland China while other groups of Chinese have preserved them (Tu, 1994).

Although the Mainland speakers had brought up the loss of China's cultural traditions and had expressed eagerness to associate with Chinese Singaporean ritual practices, they had nevertheless authorized themselves as cultural and linguistic purveyors by way of their status as natives of Mainland China. I have argued that although some of the Mainland speakers' overall linguistic behaviors appeared to "converge" to local linguistic behaviors, their metalinguistic discourses revealed that their attitudes towards the local language varieties and local speakers were informed by non-local, that is, Mainland Chinese ideologies of language 'standards'. The Mainland

speakers' tapping into Mainland-based ideologies, therefore, reflected that they constructed themselves as still influenced by their ties to Mainland China.

Hence, unlike how the network of Chinese people living outside the Mainland has been broadly characterized as "deterritorialized," in which aspects of Chineseness that are common to all are foregrounded, these Mainland speakers' ideological differentiation from Chinese Singaporeans indicated that at a local level of investigation, Chinese identity construction was not about essentialized sameness. Though the Mainland Chinese speakers did reflect essentialist ideologies in their alignment with Singaporean rituals, nevertheless, they mainly portrayed themselves as distinct from Chinese Singaporeans. Elevating their cultural and linguistic knowledge or practices above those of Chinese Singaporeans on each dimension of the intersubjective tactics (see Section 8.4 p. 269), these Mainland speakers ultimately authenticated their Mainland Chinese identity and constructed an identity hierarchy in which they perceived themselves, as Mainland Chinese, to be more Chinese, as it were, than Chinese Singaporeans.

In view of this hierarchy among these two groups of Chinese peoples outside the Mainland, studies of Chinese transnationalism which tend to focus on the (economic) power of the Chinese communities as a whole would do well to also pay attention to the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1977) that Mainland China and its nationals continue to wield within the network of Chinese communities. On a larger front, given that Mainland China has been fiercely forging ahead in its economic and industrial advancement, to the extent that even economic powerhouses such as the United States have set their eyes on its potential political and economic influence on the global playing field (Hoge, 2004; Shenkar, 2004), the ways in which Mainland Chinese authenticate themselves linguistically and assert their Mainland Chineseness at this local level of investigation

may potentially lend insight into China's emerging global linguistic influence in the future.

9.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIOLINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION

In addition to contributing to an understanding of the ways in which overlaps in ethnic, cultural, and national layers related to Chinese identity construction can be teased apart to an extent via the examination of linguistic practices and ideologies, this study has also contributed to furthering the sociolinguistic investigation of linguistic practices and identity construction among migrants. As noted in my discussion of previous sociolinguistic studies on migrant language use in Chapter 2, the focus of investigation has largely been on the extent to which linguistic resources from receiving communities have been adopted by migrants or the extent to which language variation or change has taken place within migrant communities.

In this study, the speakers' linguistic behaviors were influenced by the variable use of language resources available to them, that is, resources that were not only from the receiving linguistic context, but also from the speakers' native linguistic contexts. Through examining speakers' range of use of local and non-local language resources *and* analyzing the ideologies and meanings associated with their use of those different resources, I demonstrated that what might appear to be the adoption of local language resources among migrants might not necessarily signal that the migrants themselves were converging to the receiving community of speakers. The analysis of migrant identity construction was thus grounded in a composite of speakers' language ideologies and actual language behaviors, whereby it was not just their use of resources from the

receiving community that was used to determine whether the migrants aligned themselves with the receiving community; but rather, the use of non-local resources as informed by the meanings constructed by the speakers was also factored in.

Given the ideologies obtained through the speakers' metalinguistic discourses, we were able to see that many of these speakers did not strive to identify with the dominant group of speakers in the receiving context by fully adopting the linguistic practices of the locals, especially not at the expense of their native linguistic practices. Unlike migrants in other studies whose adoption of local linguistic practices have tend to be portrayed as in tension with their engagement in non-local (that is, their native) linguistic practices, this group of Mainland migrants conveyed their affinity to the Mainland linguistic resources. They were not about to give up their native linguistic practices even though many of them used the local linguistic resources to varying extents.

In this study, the migrants voluntarily constructed themselves as peripheral members of a community who drew on linguistic and cultural resources of the core community as needed for interactions with locals but, otherwise, constructing a strong affinity to the linguistic practices of their home communities. Migrants may tend to be analyzed as less privileged to certain kinds of capitals than members of the receiving community and may thus be perceived as trying hard to gain linguistic and social capitals through convergence to various practices of core members. However, the Mainland migrants in this study have indicated that they did not seek to socially elevate or empower themselves through shared linguistic practices with the locals; instead, extending beyond the local context, they constructed their social standing as empowered by their trans-local (that is, transnational) ties to the Mainland.

The Mainland migrants' valorizations of the various linguistic and cultural resources associated with their home and receiving contexts, as underscored in this dissertation, have implications for the investigation of language use in migrant communities: the linguistic behaviors of migrants cannot simply be influenced by their valorizations of language resources and practices at just a local level of the receiving linguistic context. Instead, it is vital to examine migrant's linguistic practices in light of their valorizations of resources and practices at both local and trans-local levels.

Researchers' access to speakers' language ideologies is also potentially vital to furthering the understanding of how language variation and change originates and propagates. The study of language change has evolved from being grounded in internal structural changes (cf. Martinet, 1955) to one exploring external (that is, social) motivations of heterogeneity in the use of a given language (cf. Labov, 1966; Weinreich *et al.*, 1968). One of the fundamental questions raised by Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) in their work on the empirical investigation of language change is how language change is actuated. Positing that language change can be systematically elucidated by statistical patterns of use of linguistic variables and broad social categories, Labov's (Labov, 1966, 1972b) studies on language use on Martha's Vineyard and New York City all but indicated that valorization processes were influential to speakers' use of certain linguistic variants over others. In this dissertation, I presented a series of actual commentaries by speakers that has lent insight into their valorization process with regard to the use of the different linguistic resources. Perhaps it is through such insights that it is plausible to catch the growth of meaning for various change options.

9.2 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Beyond this current study, I anticipate that the research on language use among Mainland speakers can be further developed in regards to data collection and analysis methods, theoretical projection of the language situation among these overseas Mainland Chinese speakers, and expansion of the study to include other communities of Mainland Chinese living overseas. The first of these aspects pertains to improvements that can be made in the collection and analysis of data. The main methodological approach used in this study to obtain data on speakers' variable use of linguistic features in different speech contexts was enlisting participants to record their naturally occurring speech in a variety of speech contexts in which the researcher was not present.

While this approach enabled me to obtain a wider range of speakers' linguistic behaviors than would have been afforded by the analysis of interview data alone, it was limited by the extent to which participants were willing or able to record themselves. Moreover, the degree of variability in the amount and type of speech data that were collected by the different individuals was high. Although speakers were asked to record themselves in six speech contexts that had been deemed to commonly occur, hardly any of the speakers recorded themselves in interactions occurring while they were out shopping; some speakers were not able to record themselves in interactions with their coworkers as they were reportedly restricted by company policy to keep conversations at work confidential. As such, very few speakers recorded themselves in contexts involving conversations with Singaporean speakers. One way to overcome the lack of speech data involving Singaporeans might be to request speakers to record themselves making phone calls to libraries, restaurants, malls, or ticketing services to inquire about hours of operation or ticket prices.

Furthermore, not all of the speech contexts involved similar amounts of speech data, given that certain contexts involved interactions that tended to be shorter than others. It was also difficult to control for the amount of speech collected in a given three-to-five minutes of recording, as the conversations sometimes involved multiple turns among different speakers, resulting in the amount of actual data collected for the speaker in question being limited to the turns that he or she had taken in the conversations. To ensure that an adequate amount of speech is collected for each speaker in each context, I might ask the speakers to record themselves over longer periods of time (such as a minimum of six minutes instead of three).

The lack of speech data of speakers' conversations with Singaporeans certainly proved to be a major shortcoming in this study, because speakers' linguistic behaviors with "regular" Singaporeans (that is, other than the researcher) would have provided more analytical depth to the study of speakers' actual linguistic practices with locals, in view of the fact that their metalinguistic commentaries often pointed to the Mainland speakers' distancing from the language use of the locals. If more discourse data with Singaporeans were to be obtained, then it would also be possible to utilize discourse analytical methods to analyze the emergent identities in the interactions between the Mainland speakers and their Singaporean interlocutors. The use of discourse analytical approaches to analyze specific interactions between the speakers and various other interlocutors could provide further insight into the range of identities constructed by speakers through interaction.

Another aspect related to this study that could be explored is the theoretical question of what the Mainland speakers' use of Mandarin in the local linguistic context and their ideologies about local and non-local varieties of Mandarin signals with respect

to language change in the long run. For example, as seen in the language use among Mainland speakers who had been living in Singapore for a long period of time (viz. Jane, Yan, Grace, and Shell), Mainland features tended to be used less frequently by these speakers. While I have proposed that the speakers' language ideologies pointed to their still-strong claims to Mainland Mandarin, have the speakers been using less Mainland features over time; and if so, at what point in their language use do their ideologies reflect weaker valorization of Mainland Mandarin and stronger valorization of Singaporean Mandarin? No doubt, I am unable to address many of these questions without first conducting a follow-up study of the linguistic practices and ideologies of these Mainland speakers.

Some questions that pertain to the speakers' use of features from different varieties of Mandarin may be explored given the data already collected: What language features do speakers choose to valorize? In addition to their use of Northern Mandarin phonological features, what lexical or phonological features from the local and non-local Mandarin varieties do speakers use to style-shift in the local linguistic context? How does style-shifting fit in with language drift in Mandarin?

The interconnectedness of the different layers of Chineseness has been explored in this current study; but the interactions among language, ethnicity, nationality, and culture remain a complex issue in Chinese identity construction. Another way of building on the study of Chinese identity construction among Mainland Chinese living overseas may be to expand the scope of the study to other communities which have received large numbers of emigrants from Mainland China in recent years, for example, cosmopolitan cities like Toronto or Vancouver (cf. Mitchell, 1997). As more local communities of Mainland Chinese speakers come to be studied, I believe we can then form a more

coherent picture of the ways in which Mainland Chinese speakers living overseas relate to Overseas Chinese and to Mainland Chinese on the Mainland and, thereby, better elucidate patterns of Chinese identity construction that arise from the complexities of interactions between local and trans-local (or transnational) social and linguistic practices.

Even though this dissertation investigated identity construction among Chinese nationals, it is by no means limited to research and theorization in Chinese or non-Western sociolinguistics. In fact, with technological advancements making air travel and communicative interactions so much more extensive than it used to be, contemporary immigrants are connected in many ways to their home countries (McKay & Wong, 2000). One can therefore expect the complex identities of speakers to come into play more and more in everyday practices. Language cannot just be used as a means by which to obtain meta-level data of the social practices of immigrants, because linguistic practice itself constitutes everyday social practice. The role of linguistic behavior thus needs to be foregrounded in the study of how contemporary immigrants view or position themselves in relation to individuals from their home and receiving communities.

Appendix I: Interview Questions

Questions for first one-on-one interview

1-1. How old are you (approximate)?

1-2. How long have you been in Singapore?

1-3. How did you decide to come to Singapore?

1-4. What stages of education have you completed in China?

1-5. Did you pursue any form of studies in Singapore? Did you take any language classes?

1-6. What were you working as in China? What is your current occupation?

1-7. Are there differences in the work environment/culture in China vs. Singapore?

1-8. While studying, working, and/or living in Singapore, what aspects of language use are/have been easy for you? What aspects are/have been difficult for you?

1-9. Have you encountered any problems with the use of English, Mandarin, Singlish, Chinese dialects; pronunciation, speed, accent, expression of phrases, grammar, codeswitching?

1-10. How much of Singapore did you know prior to coming? (Demographics, geography, cultures, religions, working environment, languages, way of living, etc.)

1-11. How did you prepare yourself for the move to Singapore? (Did you do any kind of research on Singapore?)

1-12. Are you married? How many members are there in your family?

1-13. What language(s) do you speak at home?

1-14. Is your family living with you in Singapore?

1-15. How are your children doing with respect to language learning in Singapore?

1-16. What are your plans/aspirations for your kids?

1-17. Do your children have any difficulties with language use at school?

Questions for second one-on-one interview

2-1. When interacting with people here, in what language would you choose to first speak?

2-2. What language(s) do you usually use?

2-3. In a situation where people have trouble understanding you, how do you try to make yourself better understood? (slow down, change the way you phrase certain words, change the sentence structure, switch to another language?)

2-4. Are you willing to adapt to the language habits that are prevalent in Singapore?

2-5. When communicating with locals, have you ever used language that has a strong local flavor? Examples?

2-6. When talking with a group of people comprising Mainland Chinese nationals, Chinese Singaporeans, and Singaporeans of other ethnic backgrounds, what is your language of choice to communicate in?

2-7. What is your definition of *putonghua*?

2-8. When using *putonghua* in China, do you tend to speak with less of an accent that is unique to your region? Do you also try to reduce your regional accent when speaking Mandarin in Singapore?

2-9. Has your *putonghua* undergone any change caused by the influences of Singapore Mandarin and/or other languages spoken locally? Or are there any differences between the 'standard *putonghua*' that you use in China and the Mandarin that you use in Singapore?

2-10. Do you think that your *putonghua* has gradually grown to be more similar to Singapore Mandarin? In what aspects have you observed any similarities in features that were formerly distinct?

2-11. What factors contributed to the change in your language habits, if any? (The media or social contexts like where you spend most of your time, or who you interact with—neighbors, coworkers)

2-12. Do you think it is necessary (for you) to maintain a certain standard in the use of *putonghua*?

2-13. Do you think that language is primarily a communicative tool and therefore does not need to be 'pure'?

2-14. Do you agree with the idea that if one grows to be attached to a certain place or has a desire to settle down there, then one might consciously change one's language practices to accommodate the language practices prevalent in that place?

2-15. Do you intend to pick up the other languages that are in use in Singapore (e.g., Malay, Tamil, Hokkien, Cantonese, etc.)? Which ones? Why?

2-16. Do you think that a language ought to or can be modified as the context for language use changes?

2-17. Is it crucial to keep a language 'pure'?

2-18. When you speak in 'standard' Mandarin to Chinese Singaporeans, what are their reactions? Is there a sense of familiarity? Or do they regard you as different, causing you to feel uncomfortable or perhaps even marginalized?

2-19. When talking to Chinese Singaporeans, do you intentionally try to speak Singaporean Mandarin?

2-20. What are your thoughts on Singapore now that you've been living here for a while? How different is Singapore from what you'd imagined? (In regard to work environment, living conditions, food, general welfare)

2-21. How do you like Singapore? Do you intend to stay on in Singapore for an indefinite period of time?

2-22. What are the similarities and differences among Singaporeans (of all ethnic groups) in the areas of lifestyle and language use?

2-23. What do you think of Singaporeans? How do they compare with Mainland Chinese nationals in China?

2-24. When you first arrived in Singapore, did you experience any culture shock? (E.g., with the use of English, living conditions, way of life…)

2-25. Do you read in your free time? What kind of books?

2-26. Do you read the local papers or magazines? Which ones?

2-27. What are your thoughts on the use of the various languages in Singapore? (In regard to Mandarin, English, bilingualism, dialects, the use of English and Mandarin, the competence of speakers, pronunciation, language habits, etc.)

2-28. What is your opinion on what Singapore will be like in the future?

2-29. In your daily interactions (not including your interactions at work), do you usually interact more with other Mainland Chinese nationals in Singapore or with Singaporeans?

2-30. The status of (potentially) being a Singaporean or a PR aside, do you see yourself as a Singaporean; or do you still hold firmly to your identity as a Mainland Chinese national; or perhaps as a Mainland Chinese national in the process of becoming a Singaporean?

2-31. Would you like your children to assume dual identities (i.e. be able to identify with Singapore as well as with China)? In reality, do you think that they already have those dual identities? Do they currently have a tendency to identify more strongly with one than the other?

Group discussion questions

In what ways do Chinese Singaporeans exhibit Chineseness (in their values, beliefs, and approach to life)?

Are there differences between how Chinese Singaporeans and Mainland Chinese live out their Chineseness?

In what ways do you think Mainland Chinese in Singapore differ from Mainland Chinese in China? And in what ways are Mainland Chinese in Singapore and Chinese Singaporeans alike?

Appendix II: Detailed list of speakers

Detailed information of speakers

Speaker	Sex	Age (approx.)	Length of stay in Singapore (yrs)	Region of origin (NC=Northern China; SC= Southern China)	Regional Mandarin variety (Northern versus Southern)	Language self-reported as used most often in Singapore	Professional roles	Notes on family, immigration status in Singapore (Unless otherwise stated, family members are Mainland Chinese)
Anna	F	Early thirties	4	Jiangsu, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school	Husband and daughter recently relocated to Singapore Has employment pass; application for permanent residence pending
Chan	M	Early thirties	3	Fujian, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Engineer at a local firm	Single Has employment pass
Charles	M	Late twenties	1	Beijing, NC	Northern	English	Works in logistics at a multinational company	Married to a Chinese Singaporean wife Permanent resident in Singapore by marriage
Dabaicai	M	Early thirties	2	Shenzhen, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Programmer at a multinational company	Wife is in China Has employment pass
Dan	M	Mid-forties	3	Jiangxi, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Gymnastics coach at Ministry of Education (MOE) sports center	Wife and children are in China Has employment pass
Gillian	F	Mid-twenties	6	Hunan, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Gymnastics coach at the Singapore Sports Council	Single Has employment pass

Grace	F	Mid-thirties	10	Beijing, NC	Northern	Mandarin	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school	Husband and two children are in Singapore Both children are Singaporean by birth She and her husband have both adopted Singaporean citizenship and had given up their Mainland Chinese citizenship.
Jane	F	Late twenties	10	Shandong, NC	Northern	English	Nurse	Married to a Singaporean husband Obtained permanent residence a few years prior to study, after completion of Nursing diploma at a local polytechnic
Julia	F	Early thirties	6	Jiangsu, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Rhythmic gymnastics coach at Ministry of Education (MOE) sports center	Single Obtained permanent residence a few years prior to the study
Laura	F	Late twenties	1	Beijing, NC	Northern	Mandarin	Rhythmic gymnastics coach at local schools	Single Has employment pass
Li Chen	F	Early forties	1	Shanghai, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Gymnastics coach at Ministry of Education (MOE) sports center	Husband and daughter are in China Has employment pass
Lyn	F	Late twenties	10	Shandong, NC	Northern	English	Manager at a private language school	Single Obtained permanent residence a few years prior to the study, after completion of a professional diploma at a local polytechnic

Rubin	M	Late twenties	2	Shandong, NC	Northern	Mandarin	Logistics specialist at a local firm	Single Has employment pass; completed Master's degree at a local university; application for permanent residence pending
Shell	F	Early thirties	6	Guangdong, SC	Southern	English and Mandarin	Broadcaster and producer at a local multimedia company	Single Has employment pass
Sihui	F	Late forties	1	Tianjin, NC	Northern	Mandarin	Rhythmic gymnastics coach at local public schools	Husband and daughter are in China Has employment pass
Wei	M	Mid-twenties	1	Inner Mongolia, NC	Northern	Mandarin	Manager at a multinational company	Married to Southern Mainland Chinese wife who is a Singapore permanent resident Permanent resident by marriage
William	M	Late twenties	5	Xi'an, NC	Northern	English and Mandarin	Civil engineer with a local construction firm	Wife in Singapore Obtained permanent residence within the year prior to the study, after completion of Master's degree at a local university
Xiaobo	M	Early twenties	1	Hubei, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Gymnastics coach at Ministry of Education (MOE) sports center	Single Has employment pass

Yan	F	Late twenties	10	Sichuan, SC	Southern	English and Mandarin	Research analyst at a multinational finance firm	Single Obtained permanent residence a few years prior to the study, after completion of Bachelor's degree at a local university
Yilin	F	Mid-thirties	7	Guangdong, SC	Southern	Mandarin	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school	Husband and daughter are in Singapore Has employment pass; application for permanent residence pending
Ying	F	Late thirties	3	Xi'an, NC	Northern	Mandarin	Mandarin teacher at a secondary school	Husband and son are in China Has employment pass

Appendix III: Transcription Conventions

List of the transcription conventions used in this dissertation

Transcription mark	What the mark stands for
-	Cut-off in mid-phrase or mid-utterance
=	Latching, that is, where there is no break from one utterance to the next
:	Lengthening of preceding sound segment
//	Speech immediately following the double slashes overlaps with that of another speaker
( )	Portions of the discourse which are not clear are transcribed within parentheses
(0.5)	Length of pause in terms of seconds and tenths of seconds
(( ))	Transcription comment from transcriber
.	Falling intonation
?	Rising intonation
,	End of a clause, with more to follow
!	Animated tone
CAPS	Loud speech

Additional markings such as italicization or highlighting of words may be used in specific transcripts to emphasize particular aspects of the discourses. Specific explanations of what those markings represent are provided in the footnotes.

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